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The Faggot-House.

PLAYING AT SETTLERS;

OR,

THE FAGGOT-HOUSE.

BY

MRS. R. LEE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE AFRICAN WANDERERS," "ADVENTURES IN AUSTRALIA," "ANECDOTES OF
ANIMALS," "TREES, PLANTS, AND FLOWERS," ETC., ETC.

WITH

Illustrations by John Gilbert.



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PREFACE.

SMALL as this work is, it may be advisable to offer a few words by way of Preface, as I wish to assure my young readers that the Faggot-House is no fiction, and that the following pages are chiefly the recollections of former happy hours. The history of the Cook is unfortunately true; the water-spout and its devastations were watched and inspected by my brothers and myself. George still lives, who ran away from the viper; and the singularity of the currant-bush growing on an elm was an object of curiosity to my own neighbourhood. A few events of more modern occurrence have been combined with the story; but they are not inventions, and the whole book may be accepted with but little reserve as to its veracity.

1

PLAYING AT SETTLERS;

OR,

THE FAGGOT-HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

SCARLET FEVER.—THE CHILDREN GO TO MELTON HALL.—MR. AND MRS. ELTON
GO ABROAD.

SCARLET FEVER in its severest form had heavily visited the family of Mr. Elton. One of the women servants, who had apparently introduced it, in consequence of an imprudent visit to a house where it had been raging, died; and in spite of every care and precaution, the disease spread so rapidly, that removal was out of the question. Excellent medical advice, bella-donna, and good nursing, arrested the hand of death; but the three children—two boys, one of fourteen, the other eleven, and a girl of twelve—were reduced to shadows of their former selves; and the poor mother, whose devoted attention to them, and its concomitant fatigue, rendered her peculiarly susceptible, seemed as if she would never rally, either from the fever itself, or the weakness which it leaves behind. Some of the servants

(refusing to come near the sufferers) were dismissed; and Mr. Elton, the upper housemaid, and a butler, long attached to the family, alone remained unharmed, and, when the sick-nurse was dismissed, were all who were left of the household. Mr. Elton himself was a proof of the consternation which this fearful disease creates, and which can scarcely be conceived by those who live in countries unvisited by the plague, or who have not passed through the ordeal. Some medical men even refused to attend, on account of their other patients; close friends wrote to express their pity and anxiety, but entreated that no answer should be sent from the infected dwelling. The reports of the sick were forwarded to the tradesmen, where third parties took them up, and the abandonment was complete.

Dr. Metcalfe and Mr. Elton held a long consultation in the library one evening, after the former had visited his patients; and when the latter returned to his wife, she exclaimed—

“Why do you look so sad? What is the matter? Pray tell me the whole truth.”

“My dear Charlotte,” he answered, “I will not hide anything from you, because I never do, and because, unless you know the extent of the evil, you will not, I fear, be persuaded to do that which is necessary for your own recovery. But before I give you Dr. Metcalfe’s injunctions respecting yourself, I will gladden your heart by telling you, that he considers the children perfectly well, and unusually free from those legacies which the

scarlet fever often leaves ; so that a long run in the country, absence from lessons, and common care, will quickly restore them. It is for you that he is anxious ; and he thinks your strength so completely destroyed, that he much fears the effects of the easterly winds upon your constitution, and advises your removal towards the south."

"Towards the south!" cried Mrs. Elton. "I was in great hopes I should pass the spring and summer quietly in Suffolk."

"No," resumed Mr. Elton, "he thinks you ought to go abroad as soon as you can perform the journey."

"Not without the children?" asked Mrs. Elton ; and not receiving an answer immediately, she added—"I am quite sure a separation from them would not do me any good."

"Dr. Metcalfe thinks just the contrary," continued Mr. Elton ; "he says you and I must go together ; so make up your mind. The children shall go to the Hall, where they can be carefully superintended, and be allowed to roam about as freely as possible, while we quietly bend our steps to more distant lands. He hinted this before to me. Your cough is obstinate ; and he is more and more convinced of the necessity of your leaving your anxieties behind, and going to a better climate."

"How can I leave my anxiety behind, if the children are not with me? Let only Adela come."

"If you do not see them, you will not fret every moment at fancied ills, which your anxious eyes magnify

into approaching evils; and you may as well settle it at once."

Mr. Elton's word was considered as a command to all his family; and his wife, however unwilling, was obliged to submit. Preparations were made on all sides with heavy hearts, and the children were the first to depart. The housemaid was to be their especial attendant, and whatever else might be required was to be obtained at Melton Hall, the ancient property of the Eltons.

The house was placed in a well-wooded park, and was a low, rambling edifice of red brick, covering a large space of ground, rooms having been added as had been required, but all conforming as much as possible to the original style of building. Beautiful trees encircled it, especially the drooping witch-elm, for which it was famous. On one side were extensive gardens, hot-houses, &c., and the approach was through a beautiful avenue. Mr. Elton had written to the clergyman of the village of Melton all his wishes concerning the children, and begged of him and his sister to see that their troubles were smoothed, but he, in his letter, added—

• "I have no expectation that my children are at all better than others, and thus left to themselves, they will, at first, be somewhat anxious to assert their consequence and act without advice; but this will naturally subside; and I trust to your and Miss Montray's wisdom to step in at the right moment, and be their friends. Of course, we are very anxious about them; and the more so, because of the cross old servant in charge of the Hall

However, you will know better than I can instruct you how to be their unseen guardians, till they acknowledge you as such. You will, perhaps, be surprised that I should place them in the power of Sarah Andrews; but that poor old thing has claims upon me which I cannot forget, and I cannot send her away; though I must say, as my boys and girl grow older, she is more determined to thwart and annoy them. However, you will be good enough to keep order among them, and while you protect, make them do justice to the poor old creature."

The claims which cook had upon Mr. Elton were not only those of long service, but she had been his nurse-maid,—had caught the small-pox from him; and while he recovered without a trace of it in his features, she, being cruelly marked, had returned to health an ugly and forbidding-looking person. She was engaged to be married, but the young man, when he saw her, said she was so changed that he could not think of her, and broke off the match. This soured her temper; she had neither strength of mind, nor education to teach her to rise above her misfortunes, so she became ill-behaved as well as ill-favored, and self-indulgence each year added to the evil. The only person of whom she was afraid was her master, who, vowing never to forsake her, kept her in better order than any one else, and as she was very clever in culinary matters, she had been retained in the place of cook by Mr. Elton's mother, and then by his wife, who, knowing the tie between her and the family, contrived to keep her without experiencing that discomfort which might

have been expected. It was with her fellow-servants that she most quarrelled; for she was very jealous of them; and she could not endure the children because they put her out of her way. It is true they seldom saw her, but on some occasions their contact had been frequently anything but peaceable.

Cook had a large black and white cat, as cross as herself, and equally disliked; the boys teased old Tom because he was so surly, and caught the birds, and they frequently crept into the kitchen, where he slept in his mistress's great chair, to upset chair and all, upon which old Sarah would fly at them, and turn them out by the shoulders. She occasionally made no hesitation in boxing their ears; and when they complained to their father of her disrespectful treatment, he would hear the whole story, then laugh, and say, "You have no business in the kitchen; and if you feel the weight of her hands, it is only what your father has gone through before you. In fact, she behaves better to you than she did to me, for in the capacity of my nurse she often slapped me, doubtless for some mischief which I had committed."

The parting came with all its restrained grief; the fervent benedictions, the unuttered prayers, the deep anxiety, and the reiterated instructions. Mr. Elton saw his treasures off by the railroad, and even his eyes were full of tears; however, dashing them away as the bell rang, he bade them a cheerful good bye, and intreated them not to provoke old Sarah *too* much. The boys laughed, nodded assent, and were whirled away at the rate of

thirty miles the hour. As it is to this part of the family that our narrative chiefly relates, we shall follow them to their Suffolk home, and leave the elder branches to take their lonely journey, as they thought it, full of hope however for a speedy return, and accompanied by the old butler, and a maid who had been newly engaged.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL AT MELTON HALL.—THE CROSS COOK.—MR. AND MISS MONTRAY.
—THE CHILDREN GET WEARY OF THEIR LIBERTY.

THE parting with their father and mother for an indefinite time, and under such circumstances, rendered our young travellers silent for the early part of their journey, and nearly the first remark proceeded from Ernest, the elder boy, who said, "I am afraid we shall have more to do with old cook than ever we had before, for we shall only have her, Dinah the kitchen-maid, our own maid Harriet, and David the page, as our in-door servants; but I hope we shall not quarrel."

"I will not be the first," exclaimed Adela.

"Nor I," cried Ernest.

"Nor I," echoed George, the youngest of the three.

They then discussed their future operations till they reached the town called Dullbury, where they were met

by the gardener, who had once been a coachman, with a carriage drawn by two old horses, only taken from the park for occasional service. They had several miles to go, but as they drew near home, so many well-known objects presented themselves, that they were continually calling upon each other to observe them. Both sorrow and fatigue were for the time banished, as they exclaimed in varied tones, "There's the wood so full of nuts ; I wonder if there is a good show for them this year. There's the bend of the river where papa caught that cunning old carp ; there's the gate-post, Adela, off which you jumped on to the cow's back when you rode her home. There's the turning up of the church lane ; there's Mr. Montray's house ; and here we are at the park gates."

The lodge-keeper's wife made her lowest curtsies. Her white-haired children, with bright, crimson cheeks, bashfully pulled the front locks of their hair ; the few inmates of the hall welcomed them on the steps of the front door ; even old cook broke into a grim smile, and the others either grinned joyously, or uttered a salutation.

"Well, they be grown nice young gentlemen," said David, as they passed on ; which cook gruffly contradicted by saying, "They are just like three skeletons come among us."

In reality, cook's heart was not as much at fault as her temper ; and persons, with or without education, never seem to consider, that if temper leads us to do that which is unkind, it matters little to the object of it whether the real disposition be good or not ; so she made broths and

jellies, saved her new-laid eggs for them, and as long as they were weak and ailing, she was very kind. The next morning she asked Adela what she was to provide for dinner, which was rather a startling question, but to which the young lady prudently replied, cook knew better than she did, and therefore she should always leave it to her; but they would like to dine at two o'clock. Cook was pleased with the compliment, and as she retired, Mr. Montray, the rector, called, saying he just looked in as he was going to see some other clergymen at a distance: that his sister was coming in the course of the day; that he hoped they should be all very good friends, and that he should see a great deal of them: he hinted that he should be happy to assist them in their studies; but so evident a change came over their countenances as he mentioned study, that he wisely made no further allusions to the subject. He added, that in consequence of Mr. Elton's letter, he considered himself as a sort of guardian over them; not to interfere, or even to control, but to help in case of need.

Mr. Montray took his leave, and his sister made her appearance some hours after with similar offers of service; when, however she spoke of frequent companionship between her and Adela, the boys exclaimed, "No, Miss Montray, that won't do. We have all been ill together, and must get well together; we are all sorry for the same thing—poor mamma's health—and we cannot be separated from Adela. She plays so well with us that we cannot spare her."

"Indeed, I should be sorry to part you," said the lady, "and I wish to enliven you all, for I give you notice you will be very solitary, the history of the scarlet fever having preceded you even here, and of course with exaggerations in its travels, and I do not think you will have any companions of your own age."

"We can do without," said George.

"But we are very much obliged to Miss Montray," added his sister, wishing to soften his bluntness ; and fearing that he had been rude, the boy handed her into her little poney-carriage, and said, he hoped often to be at the Rectory with his brother and Adela.

Change of air, strolls about the park, rides and drives with their ponies, the latter entered into with all the zest which novelty creates, added to a long confinement from sickness, led our young friends occasionally to overstep the bounds of moderation. They were out early in the morning, before the stables and ponies were unlocked, and then they seized upon some unfortunate donkey, and rode it in turns, so that they came back to breakfast with enormous appetites. But as excess in everything brings punishment with it, Adela, at the end of the week, was unwilling to rise for the early excursion ; the boys confessed to the same disinclination, and this was laid aside ; they did not go out till the evening, when they wandered listlessly from tree to tree, and felt weary and dispirited.

"Humph," said old cook ; "I told you, Harriet, those children were doing too much. I shall send for the doctor."

When Harriet told this to the young people, they summoned cook, and insisted on it she should do no such thing; they had had quite enough of the doctor, and it was very wrong of her to interfere. This greatly affronted cook, and she bounced out of the room, and shut the door with great violence.

On Sunday, the three children went to church, where their pallid faces made the wise persons around them shake their heads and say, it was plain by their looks they were not well; but they also attracted the attention of Mr. and Miss Montray, who unhesitatingly told them, as they walked from church together, it was their duty to see the doctor, and he was accordingly sent for the next morning. He was judicious, prescribed no medicine, lessened the over-feeding of the cook, to her great disgust, and ordered them to keep perfectly quiet for a few days, and only to take exercise sparingly till they were strong enough to bear more exertion. It was then that time began to lay heavily on their hands. They were more alive to their anxiety for their mother, the news of whom was far from satisfactory; and they felt not the slightest inclination to renew their acquaintance with their neighbours, had these neighbours been so inclined, "for who knew what the next intelligence might be;" so they chiefly passed their time in the library, each on a sofa, reading for hours. Had they sought occupation or amusement in the higher walks of literature, they would doubtless have been strengthened and invigorated by their new occupation, but in their listless and languid state,

they confined themselves entirely to works of fiction, and were soon weary of them as well as themselves. They had never had so much liberty before, and supposing that the pleasure they had hitherto enjoyed in reading a few select novels under the direction of their father, could be continued without his judicious selection, they seized upon the pastime with avidity, and were surprized at the condition in which they soon found themselves. The whole of a wet morning had been passed on the sofas in an endeavour to beguile the time with the contents of the shelves which presented the fashionable novels, but not understanding their purport, clever as they were, the children, after their early dinner, fell fast asleep.

After some time had elapsed, Adela and George were startled into consciousness by Ernest, who, with closed eyes, had been for some time thinking with surprise, how little they had enjoyed that liberty which at first they deemed would be so delightful ; and when the truth flashed across him, he suddenly rose and exclaimed, "I'll tell you, Adela and George, what it is that makes us so heavy and uncomfortable—it is nothing but idleness."

"I dare say it is," replied Adela, to whom a glimpse of the same opinion had more than once occurred. "Suppose we go to the Rectory to-night, and ask the advice of Mr. and Miss Montray."

As she spoke these words, the rector rode up to the hall door, dismounted, and found them in the library.

"We were coming to you, sir, this evening," said Ernest, "in order to consult you about ourselves. We

do not get on as well as we could wish, and as Adela and I think it is because we are so idle, we would wish for a little of your assistance."

"Thank you, my dear children for wishing to make a friend of me. Go even now to the Rectory, take tea with us, and we will have a long talk together. I am on my way home, and will prepare my sister for your arrival. I was uneasy at not having heard anything of you for several days, and came round to make enquiries."

The trio walked leisurely to the Rectory, for the rain had cleared off, and a bright, warm, Spring evening had succeeded. They stated their grievances to their excellent pastor, who heard them with great patience. He then smilingly turned to Ernest, and said—

"You are quite right, my boy, you have abused rather than used your liberty in all respects; and weariness and dissatisfaction are the consequences. I think, however, I shall easily find a remedy; that is, if you will follow my advice."

They all three promised eagerly, and the result was, that Mr. Montray should give them two hours instruction every morning, and that the preparations for these two hours should afford them additional occupation. Besides which, Adela should now and then play duetts on the piano with Miss Montray, that she might not forget what she had already learned. George, who had not been quite as eager as the two others for relief, then suggested that it would be a great trouble to Mr. Montray; but Mr. Montray smiled, and said—

"Do not fear for me, my young friend ; your father is a wise man, and thought it so very likely you should fall into the condition which you have just been describing, that he wrote to me to clear your difficulties, and put you in the right path the moment you became desirous of my influence, even trusting me with Adela."

"That is so like papa," exclaimed Ernest ; "but, sir, we have no right to take up your time, so valuable to others."

"It is all arranged with Mr. Elton," said Mr. Montray ; "and now, Mary, let us have some of your best tea, then we will sing together, and if the night be not damp, we will walk part of the way to the Hall with you."

"Do you think we ought to read any more stories, sir," asked Ernest, as the party walked home.

"Not just at present, I should say," replied Mr. Montray ; "but by and by have recourse to them sparingly, for amusement chiefly ; and yet, some of them give us excellent lessons, and an insight into human feelings and actions which are useful ; but you scarcely know enough of life to profit by these ; therefore to you, your late readings have all been amusement, and too much of this is unhealthy. I shall give you some hard work as soon as I think you are able to bear it."

"We shall not mind that," said Ernest and Adela ; but George did not seem to be quite so sure of his liking for hard work.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHILDREN BEGIN TO WORK.—THE FAGGOT-HOUSE.—CONSULTATIONS.—
DALTON, THE GARDENER.

THE children rose with alacrity at six in the morning, and breakfasted at seven. The boy returned with the letter-bag by eight o'clock from Dullbury, and brought news of the dear mother, which, from being a little more cheering, gave them fresh spirit to go to their new tasks. The letters were read and re-read, and ten minutes were taken out of the two hours to communicate the news to Mr. Montray, who had himself heard from Mr. Elton.

Adela had predicted that Mr. Montray would be strict, and she especially found his thorough mode of teaching quite new. The first lesson was chiefly a preparation for others; but the two hours passed so swiftly, that the pupils were quite surprised when the clock struck twelve. The next day the exercises were ready, and the two hours passed as swiftly and even more agreeably than before. They wrote to their father and mother of the change which had been effected, and of the happiness they anticipated in reading the books of travels, biography, and history which Mr. Montray had recommended; and they described the pleasant hours when they took it in turns to draw, or Adela to work, whilst George or Ernest read; taking care, however, that she should also have her

part in reading aloud ; it being an accomplishment most important for man or woman to acquire.

The influence all this had upon the health of the Eltons was soon manifested by their improved appearance. They took much exercise ; but instead of coming home heated, and too tired to sleep, they were buried in slumber a few minutes after they went to bed. The perils and dangers to which travellers were exposed, and their adventures, were quite as exciting as the novels which they had lately read ; they rejoiced in their escapes—they were taught to draw from history the influence of events upon men in after years ; and the references which they were obliged to make for Mr. Montray, were a source of great delight. Above all, they felt a still deeper interest in that which explained or related to Scriptural writings ; and the descriptions of other countries and their inhabitants enlarged their comprehension of the works of God.

The weather now became very warm, and there was every appearance of a fine, dry, and hot summer. The heat had induced Adela and Ernest to remain within after their early dinner ; but George, who was much the most restless of the three, had been away for some time. At about four o'clock he re-entered, with blazing cheeks and sparkling eyes, and, with an air of excitement which awakened the curiosity of his brother and sister.

“Hollo ! George, what has happened to you, my boy ?” said Ernest.

“The most delightful thing in the world,” replied George. “I have been building a new house for us all.”

"I should think this was good enough for us," observed Adela.

"I mean a sort of summer-house," resumed her brother, "where we can act travellers, or settlers, or what we please. I was in the Park, when I saw a load of faggots brought ~~in~~ by Jim Stubbs, the woodman. I did not take much notice of them till they came near, and Jim told me they were the thinnings of the wood in Church Lane, and that he was going to stack them for the use of the Hall. Some, he said, were dry enough to be put away directly; but others he must set up till a little of the sap of the twigs had dried out. He soon made them stand wide apart at the bottom, and touch at the top, like a cottage roof; and as I went under them I thought it would be capital fun for us to come there for some hours every day, and read, and live there as if it were our very own. So Jim and I set them up very carefully, and very thickly, and we chose the best place in the Park for them. He will do anything I ask of him, he is so good-natured; and it was he who said it would not be good for us to be so far from the Hall by ourselves, and so near the opening to the lane; and so we walked about until we found a nice spot, and there built the house up. Do come and see it."

"As soon as tea is over," said Adela; "you look so hot, George, you had better rest quiet, and then we will all go."

"Where have you put it?" enquired Ernest.

"Close to the palings by the Croft," answered George, "and not far from Mr. Moffat's mill; for Jim said, if we called out, and wanted anything, the men there would

hear us: it would be as well to have somebody within reach. We shall be just as much hidden there as if we were in the middle of the Park; and Jim also says, all the other faggots may be used first, so that we can let ours stand as long as we like. He has filled up one end, tied the bundles of faggots one to the other, smoothed the ground inside, will cut the grass all round it to-morrow morning, and you can't think what a beautiful place it will be."

Tea was to have been hastened, but cook happened to be in a very bad humour, and said the kettle would not boil, and she did not see the use of attending to children's whims; in fact, as soon as the children were well, and no longer needed her especial care, she returned to her generally unaccommodating temper; and George exclaimed:—

"What a capital thing it would be if they should ever be able to make their own tea at their own house, out of the way of that cross old cat!"

"Hush, George," said Adela; "you know we promised papa not to get out of humour with her; besides, you know you are talking nonsense. How should *we* ever be able to make tea anywhere but at home?"

"We shall see," said George.

David was punctual; the tea was on the table exactly as the clock struck five; the meal was hastily despatched, and the party immediately started to inspect the wonders of the new domicile which George and Jim had contrived for them. By half-past five they beheld the pointed dwelling, rising in a little nook, and placed on the top of a small undulation of the ground. Ernest and Adela

uttered a joyful cry, rushed towards it, and when they entered and looked around them, they were still more delighted. They saw how completely they were sheltered from observation, so that hundreds of persons might pass through the Park and not discover them, and they sat down on the grass underneath, talked of the pleasure which they expected to enjoy there, and laid plans for their future operations.

"We will live here," said Ernest, "as if we were in the bush, which so many travellers talk of, and in England we need not be afraid of wild beasts or savages."

"I should not care if there were any," cried George, whose spirit of adventure was much the strongest. "Adela shall work for us; we will have all sorts of things up here, and we will never let old cook come within twenty yards of us."

"How are we to get the things you talk of?" asked the more practical Ernest; "if we take them from the Hall we shall have the enemy open upon us in the shape of old Sarah——"

"Then we will buy what we want," interrupted George; "I have some money."

"And I! and I!" was repeated by his brother and sister.

Mr. Montray had been obliged to give his pupils a holiday on account of his attendance at a meeting at Worlingford, which would detain him all day, so the children agreed to drive over to Dullbury in the poney-carriage and make some purchases. They made their calculations beforehand, that they might not be confused,

or forget anything—their funds were stated; and it was curious to see, amidst the inexperience of all parties, how each corrected the other's requirements or profusion.

"In the first place," said George, "let us make a promise to each other that we will not be helped, or waited on by the servants, and that we will be as silent as possible about all we do here; for if we are not, old Sarah will be sure to spoil our fun."

"Agreed!" said the others; and, taking her memorandum-book from her pocket, Adela proceeded to make the list. A set of tea-things complete was the first item in the said list, and then came the tea-kettle.

"But how shall we boil the water?" was the question.

"I know how to light a fire," said Ernest; "and I will set up three sticks, gypsy-fashion, over it."

Tea was the next consideration.

"And what about tea-spoons?" said Adela.

"We all have silver spoons of our own," observed George.

"Yes; but I think neither papa nor mamma would like us to take them out of the house; besides which, all the plate is under cook's care, and we never could get them from her. We must buy either plated ones, or German silver."

"Not pewter," cried George; "it always tastes disagreeably."

"Shall I say half-a-dozen, in case we should ask any one to tea?" resumed Adela.

"Why, who have we to ask?" said Ernest; "and if anybody should come, we could lend them a stir of ours."

Adela and George prevailed, and six tea-spoons were to be purchased.

"Our own clasp knives will do," said George.

"But I have not anything except a penknife," observed Adela; so some knives and forks were added to the list, with a promise from George that he would always be the knife-cleaner.

"How shall we get milk?" was almost a simultaneous exclamation, which produced a great deal of thought and discussion; they could not save it from their breakfast, because, in hot weather, it would turn sour; then the nearest farm-house was thought of, but even that was too far; and besides which, such a transaction as buying milk, would betray them to the whole neighbourhood.

"I dare say the diggers in Australia went without milk," observed George; "and recollect how many travellers refreshed themselves with tea when they could not possibly get any milk; and what do they do on board ship in long voyages where they have neither cows nor goats? Suppose we try a slice of lemon, which is said to be so good, that people come to like it better than milk;" but his brother and sister did not relish the proposal.

"What a pity we cannot keep some goats," said Ernest; "we would if we were going to stay here beyond this summer, but at present I think we must make up our minds to drink tea, minus milk?"

"We'll put the more sugar in," said George; "and then as to eating, we can buy bread and butter in the village. By the bye, Adela, set down something for hold-

ing butter, and some mugs ; we won't have anything so breakable as glass tumblers."

"Why should we not have tin mugs for our tea?" asked Ernest.

"No ! no !" said the others ; "tea in tin mugs is downright nasty. I do not see why we should do things more roughly than is necessary. We will get a large wooden bowl from the village for washing up the things, and we will beg some old cloths of Harriet for wiping them ; we can trust her ; and, indeed, I foresee we shall have to trust more than we think, if we mean to be comfortable."

"Well," said Ernest, "we are not doing anything wrong, and I do not care ; the great reason for secrecy is, first, to prevent cook from knowing anything of our plans, for she would be sure to play us some spiteful trick ; and, secondly, it might excite curiosity, and we should have too many coming to pry and look at us."

As the trio walked back to the Hall they talked much about their future doings, and all agreed in one thing as absolutely indispensable ; which was, that no attractions should ever induce them to neglect their lessons with Mr. Montray, and that they would never attend to anything else but their exercises while they were undone. Then, what should be the name of the new dwelling ?

"There is nothing better than the truth," said George, "so let it be 'Faggot-House ;'" and this was agreed upon. They turned round at the last place where it could be seen, and Ernest exclaimed :—

"It will be all very charming in dry weather; but suppose it should rain, what will then become of us?"

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof?" said George. "At present, Jim Stubbs says it will bear a good deal of rain, and it is only a tempest that we have to dread. Depend on it we shall always find a remedy for all our troubles, if we exert our wits and our bodies also."

"That makes me think of seats," observed Adela; "for if it should rain, the ground will certainly not be a fit place for us to sit upon. I think we must begin by making a friend of the gardener; he is very good to us, and willing even to put himself out of the way for our sakes. No one else will want them this summer, therefore let us ask him to lend us the stools belonging to the root-house, or some which were made for the garden."

"I know," said George, "where there are some of our old school boxes, and these would be very useful, if we could but get at them without cook's knowledge, for the room in which they have been put is close to hers, and she is always up there when she is not in the kitchen."

"I hate to do anything underhand," said Adela; "but considering how cross she is, I do not see any harm in getting them away, while, for instance, she is asleep in her great chair after her dinner, or is gossiping about the village."

"Besides which," added George, "Jim Stubbs says she often prowls about in Church Lane."

"You and Jim Stubbs seem to have had a great deal of conversation together," said Ernest.

"It was all while we worked yesterday," replied George; "but if I had been willing to listen, I might have heard the history of the whole village."

Supper ended, the exercises for Mr. Montray were finished, that they might have the whole of the following day for their excursion, and for the arrangement of their house. They retired to bed full of happy schemes for the morrow, and the next morning they requested they might dine at one, instead of two, as they intended to go to Dullbury; "and, in fact," said Adela, "I shall be obliged to you, cook, if you will always let us dine at one o'clock in future, as it will divide our day better for us."

They carried to Faggot-House all that they could then find which they thought would be desirable there; and when they arrived, they saw the head gardener surveying the premises. He touched his hat, and said—

"I beg your pardon, but I thought I might help to make you comfortable up here. I saw Master George and Stubbs at work yesterday at this place, and he told me what you intended to do. I can bring you some seats from the garden, for they are now standing under a shed; and as you did not order me to do so, I hardly thought it worth while to dress up the garden, master and mistress not coming. You can have the large table out of the root-house, miss, if you like."

The children joyfully accepted his offer, at once con-

sulted him about their difficulties, and confided their feelings about cook.

"You see," said Ernest, "we want to do everything for ourselves, as much as possible, or else it is of no use our having such a place; and we don't want to have old cook meddling with everything, and scolding, and grumbling; so, gardener, please not to talk about what we do here."

"I won't mention it, I promise you, sir; I'll only slip in the things which are too heavy for you to carry; but wouldn't you like a bit of a garden? I wouldn't offer to make it for you; but I don't think it would be too late to sow some mignonette; if you dig a bit of ground up for it near you, just to smell sweet, and put a few grains of the canary-bird creeper, and convolvuluses, which grow so fast. If you like, sir, I can give you the seeds?"

The offer was joyfully accepted; and then the difficulty about the milk was submitted to him, which he removed by saying, that as his master allowed him to have as much milk as he liked, he had only to ask for a pint more, and one of his children should take it every afternoon to one of the summer-houses in the garden, and leave it there, and they could take it as they passed up to the Park. I would do anything to please you, gentlemen, and Miss Adela," said he, respectfully touching his cap; "but, begging your pardon, I would do much more to circumvent that cantankerous old woman at the Hall, who delights in tormenting everybody."

CHAPTER IV.

VISIT TO DULLBURY.—THE FIRST FIRE LIGHTED.—THE FIRST TEA.—THE
ELM AND CURRANT BUSH.—SPOONS, ETC., MISSING.—ANTS—BLACK-BEETLES.
—OILS.—FROGS.—MICE.—KITTEN.

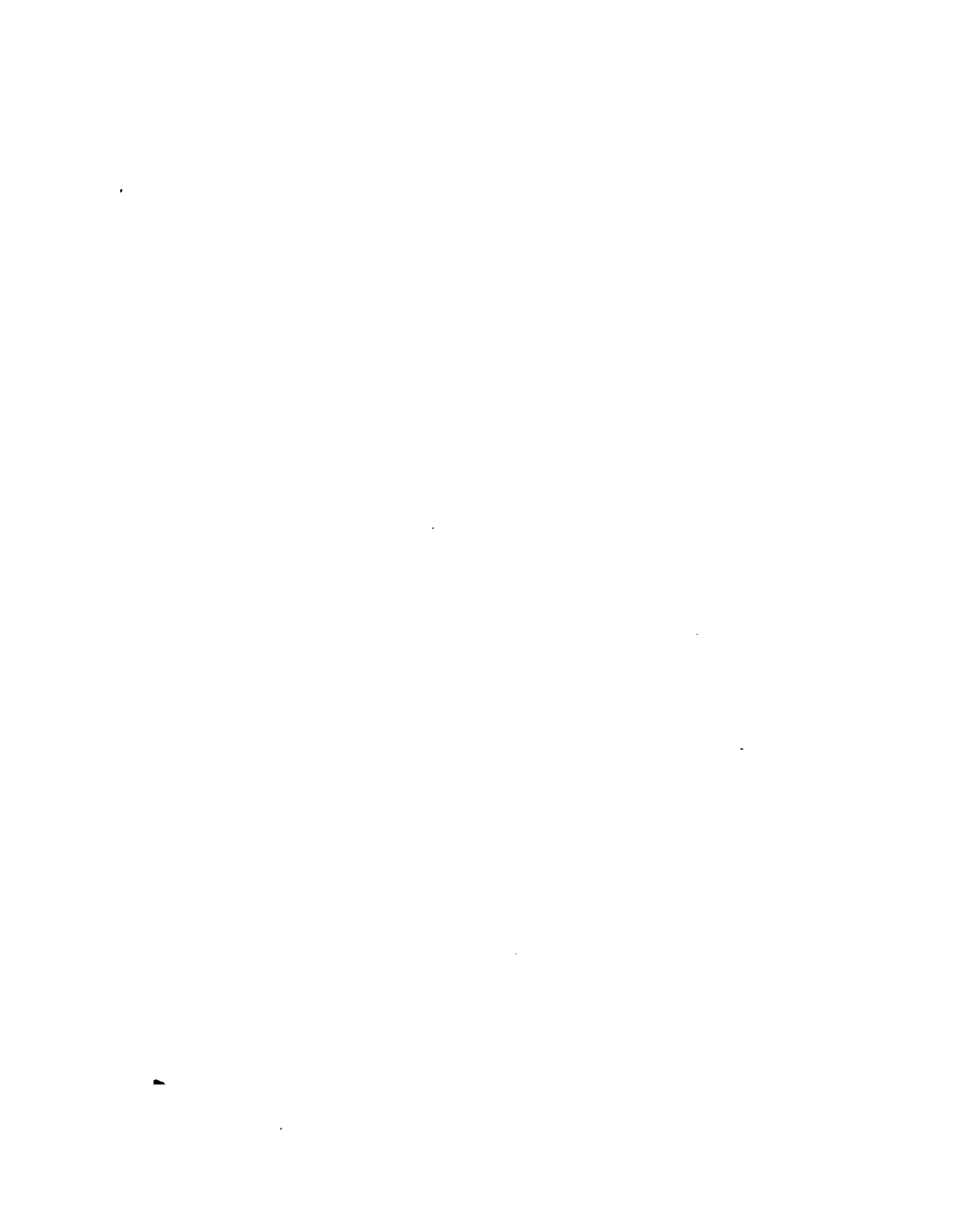
THE poney-carriage drew up to the door by two o'clock, and, ordering a basket to be put in for holding their purchases, the trio started in high spirits, George sitting behind and Ernest driving. Their first care was to bait the poney, for they had come very fast, and it was a warm day, while Adela proceeded to the crockery-shop, where her brothers soon joined her with the carriage. There she saw several things which reminded them of wants which they had forgotten, such as jugs, sugar-basin, and a salt-cellar.

When they had finished at the porcelain shop, they went to the ironmonger's, and there the boys were sadly tempted to lay out their money, but Adela restrained them. They however procured a tea-kettle, a tin can for holding water, and one or two tin plates and dishes, and two large tin cases with lock and key, in which they might keep sugar, biscuits, and other stores which they might happen to have. The party did not return till after five o'clock, and they were then too tired to find their way to Faggot-House that evening.

With cook's usual grumbling at the alteration, the dinner was served next day at one, and this was kept up



The drive to Dullbury.



without more fuss, as it turned out to be more convenient to herself. Then the young party joyously started for the Park, and sent cook word they should not be home till supper time, as they meant to drink tea out. They carried their purchases, and were well laden; but they were too happy to think of fatigue. On arriving, they were delighted with the habitable look of the place; the table was of tolerable size, and pushed up to the further end, and the stools were arranged at the sides, by their friend the gardener; the milk was waiting for them; they unpacked the cups and saucers, and then discovered it would have been a great advantage to have had a tea-tray.

"We shall find out many other things that we want," said George, "and we can but go again to Dullbury: I shall now fetch the water."

In the Park, not far from Faggot-House, was a charming little dell, where a sudden descent in the ground had transformed the stream that ran through it into a miniature cascade; this fell into a pool, and then taking its way out of the ground, was lost in a wood beyond. The water was very clear and pure, and shaded by trees, so that it was always cool, and it was the source whence the inmates of Faggot-House derived their supply. It had always been a favourite spot of theirs, and they had decorated it with large stones brought from various places, sometimes forming miniature rocks, and at others supporting the crumbling banks.

The fire was lighted, Adela having provided herself with matches for the purpose; the sticks were erected,

the boys collected fresh wood, and made a grand blaze, in the midst of which hung the kettle, suspended by a piece of string.

"Adela," said George, after getting red in the face, and panting over a large stick which he had been vainly trying to break over his knee, "we must have a wood chopper, for I cannot break——"

And, as he spoke, down went the kettle into the fire, scattered the ashes over George, face and all, and it was a great mercy he was not scalded. When the consternation had subsided, a general laugh ensued, and it was found that the high, mounting blaze, had caught the string attached to the kettle, and burnt it through, and of course it fell immediately.

"We must be more moderate in our pretensions another time," said Adela, carefully gathering the fire together again.

"Oh Adela, dear," said Ernest, his sides aching with laughter, "add a chain and hook to your list."

The second trial was more successful than the first; the tea was made, the bread and butter, which they had that morning fetched from the village, looked most inviting; they chatted and ate, and Adela poured out the tea: she tasted her's first—tasted it again—put her cup down and looked at her brothers.

Ernest exclaimed, "What is this? it is very nasty."

George followed their example, and bursting into a laugh for about the twentieth time that afternoon, said, "We have forgotten to season the tea-pot."

"Let us make some fresh tea," said their sister; but they each contented themselves for that evening with a glass of water and bread and butter, and learned a lesson from experience.

Tea finished, and the things all put away in order, they discovered, that the projecting twigs of the faggots would be very serviceable for the suspension of various articles which would otherwise have encumbered the floor; the cloth used for wiping the tea-things was hung up to dry, and then the little party strutted about with a feeling of pleasure which they had never before experienced.

"They are draining the Park at some little distance from here," said Ernest, "and it strikes me, that if we could have two or three tiles, we might make a much tidier fire-place than on the bare ground, so let us go and find them." They accordingly found the tiles, and bringing them to Faggot-House, they built up a little neat fire-place, which kept the ashes together. They never walked out but they gathered as much wood as they could carry, in order to supply their fire.

The evenings afterwards went on smoothly; when they could not conveniently go to Dullbury themselves, the boy Ben, who rode over to that town for the letters, executed their commissions, and either Ernest or George awaited him on his return, that what he carried might not be subjected to cook's inquisitive fingers.

The discovery of one afternoon was that of a new-fashioned seat in their immediate vicinity. We have said that Faggot-House was built on a rising ground, close to

the palings which separated the Park from the Croft. This croft was a large field of arable land, through which there was a public path. It belonged to Mr. Elton, but as it contained a right of way for the people of the village, the Park had not been extended farther in that direction. The rising ground had been cut down, so as to form a high bank on the side of the field ; the palings were carried over the top, and a ditch ran along the bottom. Between the palings was an old pollard elm, leaning at a moderate angle over the path and ditch, and some vigorous branches had grown round the beheaded part, which formed a smooth surface covered with dead leaves.

“What a capital seat that would make if we could but get into it,” remarked Adela. “Your chopper came by the boy this morning, George, and if you will cut away two or three of the boughs on our side of the tree, we could get in, and overlook the country ; and I think it is big enough for us all three at once.”

George chopped away the proper branches, and for his sister’s further accommodation, cut some notches in the tree in which she could place her feet ; and she was the first to mount.

“Eh ! what have we here ?” she exclaimed. “Ernest ! George ! come and see !”

“What is it ?” said they, as they quickly ascended.

“Why a currant bush growing out of the old elm !”

By what accident this currant bush had come there was never known, but nevertheless it *was* there, green,

flourishing, and bearing white currants; and as it grew on the edge of the little platform it was not in the way, but greatly added to the beauty of the seat. The children were never tired of conjecturing about its presence there, and called the gardener to see it, who was as unable as they were to account for its appearance. This became Adela's favourite seat, where she read many instructive pages, and from it, without being seen herself, she saw a great many of the secret affairs of the village; not that she understood them, or cared much for them, but she enjoyed the thought of, as it were, living in public without being seen.

It would be needless, and even tiresome, to relate the daily adventures which occurred during the time the children partially lived at Faggot-House, and we will only select some of the most prominent of the occurrences. They wrote a full account of it to their parents, and said they enjoyed it so much, that they were almost indifferent to other amusements, especially as they could combine so many in that spot. Mr. and Mrs. Elton were greatly interested in it; every now and then, without solicitation, sent home an additional amount of pocket-money to be spent on Faggot-House; and truly it did become a very charming place; the mignonette grew beautifully, and scented the air all round, and people wondered why, at one part of the Croft, there was always such a delicious odour; while the creeping plants almost entirely hid the brown faggots with their foliage, their bright yellow specks, like little birds, and their large, red-lilac cups.

Of course the young Eltons told Mr. Montray of their happiness, and invited him and his sister to visit them there ; but Miss Montray went away for some time to see her friends, and he, being particularly busy, it so happened that neither of them saw this wonderful dwelling at the beginning ; he, however, when he found his pupils' cheeks glowing with health, heard their animated recitals of how they met their disappointments, and how ingeniously they contrived to overcome them ; and what was better than all, when he saw they never neglected their studies, entered into their schemes with interest, encouraged them in their pursuit, and constantly said he was coming to pay his respects at Faggot-House.

As to the cook, the children never told her, but they were convinced she knew of it ; they often saw her gliding about in other parts of the Park, but as she did not molest them, they did not betray their knowledge of her presence. Frequently, however, when she wished to be particularly disagreeable, she would give a knock at the library-door, when they were busy with their lessons, and say, "Pray Miss, or Master George," for she seldom attacked Ernest, "have you seen one of the silver dessert-knives, or have you seen one of the table-spoons," &c.

"No, cook, we have nothing of the kind here ; has David lost them ?"

"Not David," she would reply ; "but I thought, perhaps, you might have taken them to use ;" and then she would pause, and when they declared that they had not seen anything of the kind, she would go away mut-

tering—"Nothing was safe where there were spoiled children."

On one occasion, when she had been more persevering than usual, George declared he would follow her, and insist on the plate being counted before them once a week; but his brother and Adela held him back, and prevailed on him to let the old woman alone.

As is natural on such occasions, various accumulations took place at Faggot-House, and the stores so increased that they could no longer be held in the two original tin cases or the boxes, so they were put into baskets; the impolicy of which was soon manifested by a loud exclamation from Ernest, one day, who, on opening one of these baskets containing sweet biscuits, found it full of minute ants, which were feasting on its contents in such numbers that it was impossible to make use of them. It seemed as if one colony had imparted to another the news of the feast, and thus roused the neighbourhood. On looking at the back of their house, they saw narrow, black, moving lines, which were myriads of ants coming for their shares, which they traced to ants' nests at a considerable distance in the Park, and into which smaller streams were pouring, like the tributaries to a river. Even the tin cases were not entirely exempt from their invasion, closely as they seemed to fit; for the ants squeezed their minute bodies through the smallest possible crack. The children tried all they could think of to free themselves from these troublesome, clever little creatures; they poured boiling water over them,—they spread pepper over them,—they,

with the help of the gardener, blew them up with gunpowder ; and although they all destroyed handfuls of them, the insects, in two or three days, re-appeared in the same profusion. Advice was asked of the Rector, and all his remedies were tried, but in vain : he did not suggest anything effectual. But, at last, Ernest one day read in a botanical work, that the oil extracted from the seeds of the *Melia azedarach* effectually prevented the approach of insects, provided those who used it could bear the disagreeable odour which resulted from it.

“ I believe it is impossible to get that here,” said he ; “ but suppose we ride over to the chemist’s at Dullbury, this evening after tea, and ask him to give us something which may be used as a substitute ? ”

They accordingly procured some oil of petroleum, oil of turpentine, and other equally disagreeable oils. Which succeeded, they could not find out ; but they got rid of their numerous enemies at last, and were not so much inconvenienced as if they had been in a house, the open air taking away the greater part of the odour. What had been touched by those oils, however, retained an almost distressing amount of it, and they were obliged to throw several things away.

Another advantage arising from the use of the strong-smelling oils, was the dislike evinced to it by the frogs, who had much inconvenienced them, and who had seemed to think they had as much right there as themselves, and made use of the table and stools, on which they seated themselves with the utmost coolness. Their presence

was desirable outside, for they ate many insects which were troublesome; but there was no desire for closer acquaintance.

Besides the frogs, who were thus kept at a distance, black beetles were also dispersed, who had been at constant warfare with the ants, and were sometimes so ferociously attacked by numbers of these little enemies, that they were thrown on their backs and eaten up alive.

The mice defied all smells; for when they could not get at anything else, they ate their cloths, and occasionally attacked the boxes containing their stores. On telling their maid of this, she suggested that they might keep a cat at Faggot-House.

"Cook has such a nice little kitten," said Harriet; "and if you took that to the House, Miss Adela, I dare say she would stay; particularly if you petted her for a few days, and tied her up at night when you came away. She will not remain there, unless you use her to it by degrees."

"But who is to ask Cook for her?" said Adela, when she told her brothers what Harriet had said.

"I sha'n't!" said Ernest, echoed by George; so the task devolved upon poor Adela, who, going into the housekeeper's room after breakfast, at once boldly asked the Cook to give her the pretty little kitten, if she had no other use for it.

"I am sure, miss, she mustn't be taken up-stairs, for fear of spoiling the furniture," answered Cook.

"She shall not do any mischief," said Adela, "I promise

you." On which Cook became quite red in the face, and losing all her self-command, burst forth into a passion, abusing "that nasty place in the Park, where everything at the Hall was carried to, and where young gentlemen and ladies lived like pigs."

"You think I know nothing about it," continued she, "but I do; and if you had made a friend of me, I would have helped you; but now you may go your own way, I know what you have got. I can't answer for things, when my master's children take them from me. You may have the kitten, but she will know better than to stay at such a place as that."

"At any rate we will try," said Adela, mildly, "and carry her up this afternoon, if you please;" and, hoping to escape with only this moderate ill-humour on the part of the Cook, she was about to leave the room; but as she opened the door the woman cried out—

"Indeed, miss, I tell you that I will not have any more of the things put under my care carried to that foolish house."

"We have not touched anything of what you call yours, and you may be very sure that papa knows of everything," was the reply, "for we have written all about it to him, and he has sent us money to buy what we want."

"I am sure," retorted Cook, "he has not sent you money to buy silver spoons!"

"We have no silver spoons there," said Adela, quickly leaving the room, and sending Harriet for the kitten.

Thus, openly acknowledged, Faggot-House afterwards became so frequently the excuse for Cook's enquiries after missing articles, that she constantly interfered with the comfort of the inmates, and they were obliged to write to their papa to give them a written order, which forbade Cook to molest them with her suspicions. Mr. Elton unhesitatingly supplied them with this order, and Ernest quietly handed it to the Cook the morning it arrived. She fell into a furious passion ; but as this had no effect, she began to cry, and so worked upon herself, that she threw herself upon the ground, and there she lay for some time kicking and screaming ; at last George, fetching a glass of water from the dining-room, threw it over her, and as she rose, gasping, Adela said—

“ We shall be glad to talk to you when you can behave yourself.”

Cook screamed ; said, “ She, the oldest servant in the house, was the worst treated of any, and she would not stay to be insulted ;” so that all three of the children ran out of the library, and left her to recover by herself.

The smell, or sight of the kitten, kept the impudent mice away as long as she was there, but her owners did not succeed in making her stay ; when they returned to the Hall in the evening they tied her up with a cord, as tight round her neck as they dared to pull it, but she always slipped her head out ; and when they had proceeded a few yards, they constantly found “ Fury,” as George had named her, in compliment to Cook, trotting after them. This, after some little time, was discontinued,

and Fury disappeared as soon as they took their departure: she, however, met them on their return the next day, and played about them as usual; nor did she leave off this habit as long as they continued there. The gardener told them she went off to the woods every night, as cats constantly do in the country, if they are taken from the house, and at last end by being quite wild

"Then the gamekeepers will shoot her," said Adela, distressed about her favourite.

"Yes, if they catch her," said the gardener; "but I will tell them to be as careful as they can, miss;" and as Adela never heard of Fury's death after she left the Hall, she flattered herself her favorite was spared.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOODHOUND "CHANCE"—FISHER.—KABOBS.

A MOST agreeable adventure befel the Faggot-House party, which gave them unalloyed pleasure. As they approached their dwelling one afternoon, they saw something move within it, and George, who was foremost, hesitated to advance, exclaiming—

"There is something, or somebody in the house!"

"Nothing to be afraid of," said Ernest, pushing him forward, but immediately following, all three beheld a beautiful bloodhound, who rose with difficulty, meekly

gazed in their faces, and when they came close to him, raised a bleeding paw for them to look at. He was torn and wounded, as if he had been making his way through thorns and briars, and one wound larger than the rest, seemed to have quite disabled him; he was very thin, as well as weak, and he almost immediately fell at Adela's feet, and placed his head upon her knee, as she knelt before him on the other.

"My poor dog," she exclaimed, "what can we do for you? First let us give him some milk. Ernest, put it down to him;" he drank it with avidity, and he also ate some biscuit with equal eagerness.

"Let us carry him to the stream and wash his wounds with a sponge, and I will tie up the worst, and that on his paw with this old cloth, which is just fit to be torn into bandages," said Adela.

"Can't we get some salve for him?" asked George.

"No, I have better than that," returned Adela; "I did not let you know because I thought you would laugh at me, but I always keep a bottle of arnica here, in case any of us should be hurt; so we will put some of that to his bruises and wounds, and by-and-by we will give him some to swallow."

The poor dog, washed and refreshed, seemed like a new creature; he had given himself up to them entirely; licked their hands while they were attending to him; and when they carried him to the house, and laid him upon a mat which they had there, he stretched himself out, gave a deep sigh, and fell fast asleep.

"We ought to give the dog some meat for his supper," said George, "but where shall we get it; and ought it to be raw, or cooked?"

They discussed the point, but they ended by the boys going round to the stables on their way back to the Hall, and consulting the groom, who told them by all means to have the food cooked, "because," said he, "it makes that sort of dog so savage, sir, if he tastes raw blood; but I shouldn't advise you to give him meat every day; and you had better be careful, sir, and watch him, for fear he should have been hunted down for killing sheep."

The arrival of the dog caused great perplexity to the young party; they could not abandon him; they were uncertain of his character; they feared he would create a dreadful squabble between them and the Cook; they could not tie him up in the Faggot-House, because, although a young dog, he was strong enough, if he made any resistance, to pull the house down; besides, it was cruel to leave him when he so entirely placed himself under their protection. Ernest thought for a few minutes, and then said—

"You see that Cook does not quarrel with me as much as she does with Adela, nor with Adela as much as with George—and I know whose fault the last is. You will not let old Tom alone, George; and you delight in flying across the Hall with dirty shoes, and a few other things, which you know plague the old woman; besides which, I think she in some measure looks upon me as my father's representative; so I shall go boldly to the kitchen-door,



Ernest bringing the Dog to the Cook.

shew her the dog, and say I am determined to keep him. I am sure my father would like that mode best."

So away walked Ernest, his handkerchief round the dog's neck, and, throwing open the kitchen-door, he shewed him to Cook, while Adela and George were waiting close by to see how she received the news.

"See here, Cook," said he, "this poor dog has taken refuge with us, and I am sure both my father and mother would be very sorry if I turned him away. I shall keep him in my own part of the house, and he will sleep on a mat in my room. I shall give him clean and good habits, so that he shall not disturb you; and you will be good enough to send some meat in for his supper with ours, which I will give him outside the door."

Taken by surprise, the Cook could not find words to express her indignation and astonishment; but the torrent was beginning, when Ernest, raising his voice, exclaimed—

"Hold, Cook! I shall write to my father, tell him of the expense the dog will be, and in all things act by his advice; therefore you will waste your words if you say anything more."

The Cook was silenced; but the whole of the next day all the other servants had to keep clear of her, she was in such an ill humour. When Ernest returned to his brother and sister, they both applauded him for his cool, courageous bearing; and George said—

"It was as good as a play, Ernest, and you looked just as grand as if you had been on the stage."

The manner in which the dog looked round him and settled himself—the tidy way in which he fed out of a plate—all shewed that he had been used to a house; and when Mr. Montray saw him the next morning, he suggested that he might have been lost, or perhaps given to some one who had ill-treated him, and he had run away, as dogs will do sometimes; “but,” said he, looking rather serious, “I hope he has not been beaten for sheep-stealing.”

“I hope not,” said the boys; “what shall we do, sir?”

“Suppose you take him a walk this evening,” suggested the Rector, “and let him see your father’s sheep; for if he have that propensity, he will be after them immediately, and should he even kill one, your father’s shepherd is the only person likely to find fault with you. If he should turn out such a rogue, the best way will be to have him killed at once, for you can seldom, or ever, correct a dog of his kind thirsting after blood, if he have once tasted it. Poor fellow! he stands looking up in our faces, as if still uncertain as to his fate; he will grow into a noble dog, and I hope you will find him a respectable character.”

That same morning the groom had been round the neighbouring country, making enquiry if any one had lost a dog answering to the description of the foot-worn wanderer, but heard no tidings of such; and the two boys, in the afternoon, started with him to the sheep-fold. Not only was the poor beast perfectly tranquil, but he walked among the sheep without any sign of surprise or ill-will,

and seemed to wonder why he was watched : it was evident he had no bad propensities, and the opinion was therefore adopted that he had been ill-treated and run away. From that moment he was considered as their friend, and rightly merited the appellation. After some consultation, they gave him the name of Chance, and his perfect obedience rendered him acceptable everywhere. If they went out, and he were ordered to the stable, he would contentedly lie by the side of the horses ; he would wait for his masters at the door, when they did not wish him to enter a house, and he seemed to consider their friends as his friends ; but if any shabbily-dressed, or ill-looking person came near, then his fierceness was instantly developed. He looked rather suspiciously at Cook, and never made friends with her ; and she did not molest him, because she was afraid of him. He was of a tan colour, with large black patches rather than spots ; and Mr. and Mrs. Elton, when they heard of him, were quite pleased to think the children had such a protector.

Miss Fury was not so easily convinced of the advantages of Chance's presence ; and the next day, when she paid her visit to her friends at Faggot-House, she pushed up her back, swelled out her tail, and gave unmistakable signs of hostility. Chance took these very calmly, and finding herself unnoticed, she slyly advanced when she thought herself unseen, and tried to scratch his ears. He only shook them, which startled her so much, that she darted away and came no more that afternoon. Day after day the attacks were renewed, becoming fainter and

fainter, till at last they ended in perfect amity, and she not unfrequently took a long nap, curled up on his back, or between his great paws.

Just about this time news was brought to the boys by Jim Stubbs, that from having been less disturbed, the river, which ran close to the wood, and received the stream which passed through their Park, was full of fishes. That wood had not been cleared for many years, and consequently the fishes had remained in security, multiplying and growing fat.

"If we were to catch some, Adela, do you think we could cook them?"

"Yes, certainly," was the reply ; " we must get a saucepan on purpose, I suppose."

"Why should we?" interfered George ; " why not roast them on sticks, as savages do?"

"We can try at any rate, and we will begin to-morrow, and go home to the Hall early to-day, that we may get the fishing-tackle in order."

Accordingly the tackle was inspected, and nothing but hooks seemed to be wanting, which were procured from Dullbury. Stubbs had promised to get some bait ready, and they sallied forth in the afternoon, Chance at their heels, and had capital sport, bringing home some fine fat gudgeons and some large perch. The sticks were prepared of various sizes, to suit the dimensions of the fishes, and arranged over the glowing embers ; the sticks were turned, and the fishes were cooked to perfection.

"This is capital," said George, as he tasted them ; and

just at that moment a bounce upon his shoulder made him turn round. Fury, although she had not been before seen, had smelt the fish, and was now claiming her share.

The next day the sport was even more abundant, and the finest of our English fishes were brought home.

"There is a deep hole," said George, "near where we fished to-day, which is said to contain the finest pike in the country."

"Suppose," said Adela, "we cook a fish for old Sarah. David is going to bring some dishes up to us, which Ben bought at Dullbury this morning, and I should like to send her one—I must confess, not out of love, but just to shew how well we do without her assistance."

The fishes were cooked, and smelt deliciously; one was put between two hot plates, and despatched by David, who, grinning as he delivered the message, said—

"Mrs. Cook, my young lady sends you that from Faggot-House, and hopes you will like it; the young gentlemen caught it, and she cooked it in a new way."

"Humph!" said the Cook, taking off the upper plate, and looking at and smelling the contents with a look of aversion. However, David saw with great amusement that she devoured every morsel herself, without offering any to her companions, and that she was particularly silent all the rest of the evening.

"I think we might turn our readings to still further account," said Ernest. "Why should we not have kabobs, like the Easterns?"

"I do not see any obstacle," said Adela; "we can get

the meat from the butcher's, as we go to Faggot-House in the afternoon ; and if we are to have such splendid entertainments for tea, we must eat the less dinner.

At the next opportunity the meat was bought, in the shape of mutton chops, at the butcher's, which were cut off the leg ; the children themselves shaped them into smaller pieces, and put them on to sharp-pointed sticks, with a piece of bread between each.

“ We ought to have a piece of bacon at the top, to have them in perfection,” said Adela, “ but there was none to be had in the village ; and as I did not choose to ask Cook for any, we must go without.”

“ We should be too happy, if it were not for that old woman,” said Ernest.

“ You forget mamma,” observed Adela.

“ Well, papa says she is getting better.”

“ But very slowly,” returned Adela.

This conversation passed as the kabobs were cooking, and as soon as they were done, they were taken from the fire and laid upon the plates, without being moved from the sticks ; the lowest piece of bread had protected the lowest piece of meat from being burnt, and those between tasted as if they had been fried.

“ They are delicious,” said the boys ; “ but it is not every traveller that could put a piece of bread between his kabobs ; it, however, must make them better.”

“ I do not see why we should not have friends to eat with us,” said George.

“ We will,” returned Adela ; “ but as kabobs cannot be

good the second day, let us give the remains to Goody Thomson, and pass by her cottage to deliver them. Chance shall have a scrap or two, and lick the plates."

CHAPTER VI.

WATER-SPOUT.—CHANGES OF SURFACE.—RIDING ON THE WIND.—OVEN.—
OLD COOK.

THE weather became very hot; Faggot-House was not as cool as Melton Hall, and yet the young party could not forego the satisfaction of passing some hours there. Chance lay panting outside one afternoon, with his tongue hanging from his mouth, and there was a general feeling of oppression. George looked out, and hastily drawing his head in, said—

"I think we had better get back to the Hall, for there is a very^d heavy storm coming. Look out eastward, Ernest, against the wind. We must give up the thought of having tea here to-night. Come, Adela, let us make haste, and put away everything that may spoil, if the storm should come. Hark! there is thunder!"

All was made fast, and put by as snugly as possible; but even before they started, Chance began to get uneasy, and a few large drops fell. They had to run fast, in order to get housed before the tempest burst with great fury

over their heads. Harriet, who was watching for them with much anxiety, opened the door, into which they rushed just in time, Chance preceding them, who looked wonderingly in their faces as the thunder peeled forth its awful sounds.

"Do look at Fury, miss," said Harriet ; and, to their surprise and amusement, Fury's instinct had taught her that neither the woods nor Faggot-House were safe shelters from the violent commotion about to take place, and which even shook the old Hall ; so she followed her friends.

"Let us go up-stairs to one of the upper rooms," said Adela, "we shall see the lightning better there : it is so grand and beautiful !"

"We shall have to grope our way," observed Ernest ; "it is so dark."

"Look there !—look there !" cried George, "at that great black thing in the sky, coming from the clouds, and bending like a huge serpent."

"It must be a water-spout !" exclaimed Ernest ; "how quickly it is borne along by the wind, and now it has burst ; how lucky we were to have come up just in time to see it. I hope it was not near our house ;—but the rain now obscures everything. What destruction it will cause ! Our poor house can scarcely fail to be destroyed."

"I hope not," said Adela ; "we should scarcely be happy now without that house."

It continued to rain for hours ; the evening was dull

and chilly, and sad images presented themselves to the children, not only for their own enjoyment, but for their poorer neighbours, whose roofs were ill able to sustain the violent and continued effects of the storm.

By four o'clock the next morning, George was up and out, and as his sister and Ernest rang the bell for prayers, he returned to breakfast, his eyes sparkling, and his cheeks glowing, and before he threw himself on his knees, he said, "Let us thank God, Faggot-House is safe, and no one in the village has suffered much."

"That good Jim Stubbs and Dalton," resumed George, as Adela was pouring out the tea, "fearing what might happen, ran through the storm with a rick-cloth, and threw it over our house; and then, also, fearing that when wet it might weigh down the faggots, propped the whole up with stakes; thereby, I am sure, running great risk. I could not help going to thank them. I should have been back sooner; but I stopped while they told me great havoc has been committed by the waterspout, which has altered the appearance of the fields, and even a part of the Park, so that we should hardly know them again; the sails of the wind-mill are damaged, but as it will, I am afraid, be too damp to take our five o'clock tea at the house, we will walk about and see the changes."

When Mr. Montray came, he also re-assured them about the poor people, who had suffered little or nothing, the spout having burst over the land at the upper part of the Park and the fields beyond; "damaging some of

Mr. Elton's crops, I am afraid," he added, "but Mr. Murray (the steward) is already on the spot, doing all that can be done, and will write to your father about it. There is great cause for thanksgiving that no lives have been lost of man or beast, for the mighty force of a waterspout carries utter destruction with it."

Immediately after dinner, the brother and sister started for their walk, Adela furnished with Indian rubber galoshes. With joy they saw that all was safe at their little dwelling ; and they hoped, by the next day, if the sun continued to shine, they should be able to resume their life there : its very shape had been in its favour, as the rain had run down the sides. Their second visit was to the cascade, which was increased in volume, and the little basin which they had so carefully decked, was transformed into a large and permanent pond ; the stones were scattered to a distance all round. Several deep holes, like pits, were made in various parts of the Park, and mounds were raised in others ; dells had become hills, or deep ravines ; trees were blown down, and one groupe had been broken off close to the ground, the trunks carried to a distance, and the surface of the earth left as smooth as if a roller had passed over it. Several valuable crops of corn had been ruined, and some of the neighbouring farmers had suffered severely ; fragments of boughs strewed the ground, and several implements which were picked up at intervals, even heavy ploughs and harrows, were afterwards found to have travelled miles. Their evening reading and part of the children's

preparation for the morrow's lesson was connected with the force of the wind, which nothing can withstand. Mr. Montray told them of hurricanes in the West Indies, which he had witnessed, when children had been blown to a distance, and picked up greatly hurt, or even dead ; and of the leaden roofs of houses carried away whole and deposited elsewhere, "and," said he, "when I was in Madeira, a poor old woman was blown off her horse, and rode upon the wind down a ravine. It so verified the stories of witches, that we could not help laughing. She was, however, much hurt, and seemed to be bruised all over."

"What became of the poney, sir?" asked Adela.

"He wisely and vigorously turned into a nook of rock, and was found trembling there the next day. One of the strangest parts of the affair was, that the old woman had a stone blown into her lap, and she and the stone rode together down the ravine."

All things returned to their usually calm condition, and Ernest was lying on the grass and reading a work on Australia, when he suddenly exclaimed, "why should not we have an oven? Listen Adela and George to the manner of making an oven in the ground;" and he read the passage.

"To-morrow," said George, "we will bring up a spade, and dig the proper hole."

"And I propose an improvement," said Adela, "which is, that we make a sort of covering for the oven; you can easily put grass or earth on it, and it will be more conve-

nient than closing the mouth with stones and burning our fingers."

The hole was dug, and while Ernest was so employed, George and Adela went in search of the stones which had been scattered from the neighbourhood of the pool, and brought them to the spot, and helped to arrange them. It was not large enough to bake a fawn whole in it, but quite big enough for the cakes which Adela contemplated.

Great was the anxiety to get to the Park the next day to try the oven, and George had proposed to catch some fish and cook them in it; but Adela said they would create a disagreeable taste in the oven for ever, and she would have nothing dressed there but the cakes she meant to concoct. The flour, the butter, and the sugar, were all ready, and Adela's slender and ingenious fingers made the cakes; the boys heated the oven with wood till the stones were red-hot, and then the cakes were put in. The tea was spread, the kettle boiled, and the oven opened, when behold the cakes were burnt to a cinder. The consternation soon became mirth, and laughingly they returned to their usual fare—some potatoes roasted in the ashes of their fire, and bread and butter.

"Nothing like experience," said Adela; how well we have boiled the kettle ever since our first mishap; to-morrow we will not heat the oven quite so hot; we will go round by the carpenter's to the Hall to-night, and ask him to make me a board to mix my flour upon, as I see the flour gets in between the pieces of stick of which our table is made; that board will be a great comfort in more

ways than one. Ben shall bring me a rolling-pin from Dullbury, to-morrow ; some spices, orange-peel, and other things ; and to-night I will study Miss Acton's Cookery-book, which is in the library."

"Won't we be jolly?" said George ; "we really must, with all our resources, give a dinner."

"Yes," said Adela playfully, "order the champagne-glasses at Dullbury ; have cook up to help me, and David to wait at the Settler's Dinner."

"You are quite right, I dare say," said George, abashed, "but you need not have been sarcastic Adela."

"Dear George," she said, "do forgive me ; but I think, after I have become a little more experienced, we might ask Mr. and Miss Montray to tea ; besides, the fruit is now in season, and will help us to make a good set-out for tea, and perhaps even supper."

Ernest came in with a bundle of wood on his shoulders, and asked Adela if she knew who Cook was acquainted with across the Park ; "for," said he, "I saw her just now walking with a man, and when he saw me, he got away as quickly as possible. I thought she had not made any friends hereabouts."

"I dare say it is somebody to whom she sells what she can scrape together," observed George.

"It is no business of ours," said Adela, "but I can tell you now, and I do not know what has made me forget it hitherto, I have seen her, when I have been sitting in the tree, walk down the Croft with a stout, black-haired man, who always leaves her half-way down the Croft."

"That's the man," remarked Ernest.

Many were the trials and failures of Adela, all of which she bore with that patience which formed a portion of her character, and which quite astonished the boys. "She deserves to succeed," said they ; "she bears her disappointments with such good humour, and tries so hard." At last she could ascertain to a nicety when the oven was hot enough ; she made a variety of cakes to perfection—plum-cakes, tea-cakes, little cakes, large cakes, lump cakes, plain cakes, rich cakes, almond cakes, rusks, with several others, and even gingerbread nuts and cake gingerbread. The materials were procured from the village of Dullbury, and for the eggs and milk she had only to go to her papa's dairy, for the principal person there also took charge of the fowls.

CHAPTER VII.

INVITATION TO MR. AND MISS MONTRAY.—TEA PARTY.—POTATOE BALLS.—
ANCIENT SCULPTURE.—KUTTAKIM KICKY.—ERNEST'S CONVERSATION WITH
MR. MONTRAY.—PARTY GIVEN TO NEIGHBOURS.—LETTER FROM MR. ELTON.—
DISAPPOINTMENT.

At last the whole party agreed on the subject of inviting Miss Montray, who had just returned home, and the Rector, to tea. The consultation was held on Monday, and the evening was fixed for the following Thursday,

at five. The invitation was given in the name of the three, and dated from Faggot-House; the entertainment was specified as a high tea, at half-past five, and indulgence was requested towards the roughnesses which unavoidably attend the houses of settlers, where, perhaps, the only good thing to be found was a hearty welcome. David was despatched with the note in the evening, as they did not recollect the inconsistency of their sending invitations by a liveried page, while they assumed the character of settlers. The answer was favourable, and Miss Montray and the Rector had no doubt they should find everything of the best at the new settlement of their young and highly-valued friends.

Great were the preparations! Adela made several cakes, which would be good cold; but the tea-cakes were to be hot, and, of course, baked at the time. George thought David might be there to wait, but the others exclaimed, "No, no! that will not be at all like settlers, and we must wait on our company ourselves."

At length the important day arrived. Ernest had that morning attained his fifteenth year, and a whole holyday had been given on the occasion; so there had been plenty of time for preparations. A larger fire than usual was lighted, on one side of which were two covered dishes, kept hot in the embers; and, on the other, were some tender, juicy kabobs. They had procured half a side of bacon from a neighbouring farm-house, and this time the surmounting morsel dropped its tears of fat on the lower pieces. Over the fire was the kettle, hanging on its tri-

pod, and the water was just beginning to boil ; there was not only milk, but cream, though a large portion of the latter had been abstracted for the supper. The oven was just hot enough to keep up the temperature of the tea-cakes, which had been buttered when they were baked. A clean white cloth was on the table ; the spoons had been rubbed, so as to look quite bright ; the knives and forks were polished, and the other utensils were placed at hand, on a rude shelf constructed by the boys ; while, at one corner of the house, there was an appropriate space, hidden by boxes, for those which had been used. Good, clear water, fresh from the stream, was kept in a cool place ; the little birds, which had been fed so often by the children, twittered on the twigs over their heads ; the creepers had recovered the effects of the storm, and were in high beauty ; new blossoms of mignonette shed forth their perfume ; and Chance, rising and advancing a few yards, offered a grave welcome to the guests, increased to the number of three, by the Rector begging leave to introduce his curate, Mr. Moreton, who had arrived the evening before.

On seeing three approach, Adela had dexterously added the additional cover, and, having put on an apron of the same material as her frock, no one could detect that she was cook and entertainer combined. Many happy returns were wished to Ernest, and enquiries were made for the dear absentees.

“Of course I heard this morning,” said Ernest, “and I am happy to tell you that our dear mother is at last

decidedly getting convalescent; and I could not have had better news on my birth-day."

Mr. and Miss Montray paused for a few moments to consider how well the house was arranged; how little Adela betrayed, by her self-possession, that she received guests for the first time; she took her friends outside to admire the large convolvuli which flourished so well there, and shewed them her seat in the elm-tree, and in the meanwhile Ernest and George had finished all the preparations, and set a beautiful dish of fine gudgeons upon the table, for the commencement of the repast.

"I am very hungry," said the Rector, "for Mary would not give me any dinner, saying that a high tea was even better, and that it was only wasting a meal upon me;" and as two gudgeons were going off the table, he added, "he could not possibly let them go away, they were so nicely cooked; but I believe I must spare one for pussy, who is eyeing me so enviously under the table."

"She always comes when we have fish," said George, "and seems to smell it wherever she may be."

"How does she agree with Chance?" asked Miss Montray.

"They are great friends," replied Adela.

"This nice place ought to make every body friends," observed Miss Montray; "and I would recommend old cook to come here often, in order to put a little harmony into her composition. If I had been at home, this would not have been my first visit."

"I am happy to say," said Ernest, "that that old woman has never once been up to the house while we

have been in it, though we see her spying and prowling about at a distance. I believe she waits for an invitation, for which she will, I suspect, have to wait all her life."

At that moment George entered with a smoking dish of kabobs, and some potatoe-balls in another. The plates and knives and forks were changed in a moment, and Mr. Montray exclaimed:—

"Upon my word, sister, you were quite right. I should have been very sorry had I eaten any dinner."

"I never tasted anything so nice in my life," said Mr. Moreton; "what do you call these very good things?"

Explanations were given; the entertainers told how they had read about them, and tried by themselves to them to perfection, and that they had adopted the ways of other countries.

"I see a tiny vapour rising out of the ground at a little distance. Is that one of your contrivances?" asked Mr. Montray.

"That is our oven," said Adela, "made Australian fashion, and where we baked our cakes this very day."

"If you do not turn settlers in some new, wild country," resumed Mr. Montray, handing his plate for a second supply of kabobs, "you will be wasted. How did you get into the way of all these things—surely not from books alone?"

"Yes; we hunted for them through the books of travels which we have been reading; and I am sure we may learn a great deal from those who are called barbarians. *The least* instruction has been gathered from Africans;

but we have obtained a dish from them, with which we hope to surprise you at supper," said Adela.

"Supper!" exclaimed Mr. Montray; "then I must not have another potatoe-ball. Pray, where did you find the receipt for them?"

"They came from grandmamma's cookery-book," was the reply.

"Oh! I did not need another proof that grandmamma's are capital people; but here I have one."

"Tell me," said Miss Montray, "do papa and mamma know about the Faggot-House?"

"Certainly," said Ernest; "and every now and then they send over some money, for fear we should want for anything in our own dwelling; and I almost wish they did not, for it makes everything too smooth for us. It is all very well for us to amuse ourselves in this manner, but we know nothing of the *sufferings* of settlers."

"Stop! stop!" said Mr. Montray, as Adela pressed him to take more of her cakes; "you have a design upon the temperance of your Rector. No, I cannot take any more. Let us all sit outside, this beautiful evening, while Adela and George put away the tea; shew me, however, first to the oven."

"Oh, I must see that," said both Miss Montray and Mr. Moreton.

"And, Ernest, do shew the Rector what an altered place the stream is since the storm," exclaimed George.

By the time the party returned, Adela and George had not only put away what had been used, but set out the

supper, and then covering it up, and placing the stools in front of the house, they all either sat upon them or lounged upon the grass. They talked of the different countries from which their dishes had come, and at length reached Nineveh, which Mr. Moreton intended to visit, and they dwelt long upon the relics of that city which had reached this country, the ideas of greatness and power which they conveyed, especially those majestic figures which were placed at the entrance of the apartments, and which are beyond all others in the impression which they make of grand repose; and which, if felt at all, awaken a sense of the sublime.

"Throughout all the ancient sculptures," said Ernest, modestly taking his part in the conversation, "I have always observed, even among the monsters, how admirably they portray the characters of animals: however defective or improbable in other respects, they always give the walk, the attitude, to perfection. In the figures of which you speak, sir, they set their feet to the ground with a firmness and correctness which cannot be surpassed; and even though there may be a man's head and bird's wings given to a lion, it is still the lion which stands before you. Then, again, look at the cocks and hens on the Lycian sculptures!"

After many more observations of the above nature, which it would be tedious to relate, Mr. Montray said—

"I wonder your house is not more known in the village."

"And so do we," returned George, "for we buy a great *many* of our eatables there, such as flour, bread, &c."

"Do you know what the report there is?"

"No," said all three at once.

"It is supposed," said Miss Montray, "that your cross cook so stints you, that you are obliged to buy food, in order to have enough."

The children laughed.

"I could not understand old Goody Harvey yesterday, when she told me this," observed Adela; "but it is now explained."

"Well," said Ernest, "I can scarcely be sorry even at injustice, when it prevents others from talking of our pastime; we should know no peace if once the matter were generally published, and we cannot but rejoice in our obscurity."

The village church at length struck eight, and Adela slipped away to finish preparing the supper. As they had never before staid till after dark, they had not provided themselves with lights; but on this occasion their bedroom lamps had been carried to Faggot-House; and when Mr. Montray saw what she was going to do, he rose and said—

"Do let me play the boy for once, and help you, instead of Ernest and George; they shall sit and talk soberly to Mr. Moreton, while I play at settlers."

"Then go to the oven," said Adela, "and get me out the dish which is kept warm in it."

As Mr. Montray obeyed, he drew his hand out hastily, declaring he was burnt. Adela laughed, and taking a cloth to him, she desired him to put it round his hands

before he lifted the dish. He then managed to effect his purpose, and placed it on the table, which Adela had by this time uncovered.

"What is it we are going to eat?" asked he.

"Kuttakim Kicky," replied Adela.

"Kutta—— what? Adela;" and he repeated the name till he had learned it by heart. He then turned round and cried out, "Come all to the Kuttakim Kicky supper."

They laughingly complied; saw the smoking dish, accompanied by strawberries, cherries, and cakes, while a noble jug of cream graced the centre.

Mr. Montray pretended to be so impatient that he must be helped first, and he ate his portion silently. At length he laid down his fork, and said—

"This is the best of all. Mary, do learn how it is made; and pray, Adela, tell us all about it."

"The Africans of the Gold Coast," she answered, "make such a dish as this from the small blue crabs which abound on their shores; but the difficulty of getting crabs here, without sending a great way for them, had always prevented our trying to have it; but George rode over to Dullbury early this morning, and saw a large crab at the fishmonger's; he very properly secured it, and we have concocted it as you see. Kicky is the native name for anything stewed, or tossed up, a second time. The vegetable puzzled us, for they use what they call Encruma, which is a glutinous pod, named Okroe in the West Indies, but we have substituted vegetable marrow for that, and the capsicums were very easily gathered from the borders

outside the hot-house; of course the hard eggs were as easily procured."

"Mary!" exclaimed Mr. Montray, "if you do not give me a dish of Kuttakim Kicky before a week has past, you must hide your diminished head for ever."

The whole party insisted on helping to wash up the things and putting them away tidily, thereby creating a great deal of laughter, and then they strolled home together. Ernest walked apart with Mr. Montray, who complimented him on the rational pleasures which they enjoyed, and his young companion replied—

"I have sometimes thought, sir, that after all, we are but gratifying a love of eating, and that our minds are too much set upon our appetites."

"I do not see that," said Mr. Montray, "while you combine so many other things with your cooking; for instance, Adela's account of the African dish shewed how much research she had made about the materials; and I dare say, if I had pressed her further, she could have given me a botanical account of the *Encruma*; so that you see how much was learned by that one dish—the customs and ingenuity of other nations, the habit of contrivance, the history of the plant, and several other matters which reflection would teach her. No! no! go on, it is a most wholesome pastime for mind and body."

"There is something I wish to say to you privately," said Ernest, "and I may as well take the present opportunity. I am to-day fifteen, and I should very much like to mark it by some action on which I should think

with pleasure afterwards. Papa has been very liberal to me, and without keeping back anything which will contribute to the pleasure of my sister and brother, I have laid this by ;” and, putting a five-pound note into Mr. Montray’s hand, he continued :—“ You know much better than I do, sir, how to employ it, either for your church, or your schools, or the poor—that I leave it entirely to you ; only, pray, don’t mention it, if you please.”

Mr. Montray shook hands with Ernest, saying, “ I cannot tell you, my dear boy, how pleased I am. I will hold it as a sacred trust, and give you an account of what I do with it. It will be a favoured entry in your own great account, Ernest.”

Living without their parents as they did, the young Eltons rarely accepted any of the invitations which were bestowed on them as soon as the county families came into the country ; and when the residents were convinced that there was no danger of infection, they met their young friends occasionally at flower shows, archery meetings, and such entertainments, but they greatly preferred the quiet occupations of Faggot-House. Notwithstanding this, they thought they should not follow the wishes of their parents, unless they offered some civility in return, and they asked their young friends to an early tea at Melton Hall. Two or three of the most influential called with their answers, and said, “ You think no one knows of your Faggot-House, but we have heard so much about it, through some of the servants who go to Melton village, that we are come to petition for an enter-

tainment there ; we should enjoy it so much ; pray do oblige us."

The Elton's excused themselves by saying it was not large enough, that it would not accommodate them, &c., but no denial was taken, and they were forced to yield.

About twelve assembled to tea and fruit at Faggot-House, and at first all went on very smoothly and comfortably ; but when they had eaten and drunk as much as they could, the boys went to play at games in the Park ; became noisy and rude, and insinuated that Ernest and George were milk-sops for "managing that house as they did." The young ladies were rather shocked when they heard that Adela cooked and washed plates and dishes, and were much at a loss for conversation when they had seen all the peculiarities of the place. The Elton boys were remarkably agile, and proved their claims to boyhood by taking their share, and gaining victories in the games of strength which were played, till at last their companions, rushing back to Faggot-House, knocked each other about till they discomposed their sisters, broke some plates and mugs ; and very glad were their hosts to take them back to the Hall to play at some more quiet sort of entertainment. It was quite a relief when they went away, and the duty was performed.

The next morning Mr. Montray could scarcely keep his countenance when they said they had been so happy with each other, that they were afraid they had got out of the way of amusing themselves with their neighbours ; and

they ingenuously asked him whether the opinions expressed by their guests were better than theirs.

Mr. Montray actually smiled at their quoted observations, and within himself applauded them for their own, but he checked their expression, and so much feared to made them intolerant and conceited, that he begged his pupils to consider how much they had lived with their father and mother, which must necessarily lead to their improvement; and observed, that perhaps even those who blustered and were rude, were generous-hearted boys.

"We should not have so much cared," said George, "had they not made such a point of going to Faggot-House, and then sneered at it, called us diggers, and were quite insulting."

"At which, I suppose, George, you flew into a passion and gave it them well."

The boy turned crimson, and replied—"I felt every inclination to do so, sir; but I just recollected in time that it would have been very wrong to notice it in my own house, so I turned away."

"Shake hands, George," said Mr. Montray, "you have obtained a victory over yourself, which is highly creditable to one of your impetuous disposition, and I congratulate you with all my heart."

August passed, and September days shewed the decline of the year, with its general accompaniments of fog, mist, and rain. The Faggot-House stores were sometimes spoiled by the damp, and on one or two occasions, con-

tinued rain kept the owners entirely away. The seat in the tree was not often desirable, and they felt that their best time was over. They looked back upon the past with much pleasure and gratitude, and could not help contemplating the cessation of their Faggot-House life with regret. They derived some comfort from the hope, that their father and mother would come back and see their rude dwelling before it was demolished, or out of order, and they flattered themselves they might perhaps even entertain them within it.

"Not to tea," said Adela, "that might be too chilly for mamma, but to luncheon some day."

They all wrote thus much, and implored Mr. and Mrs. Elton to come and see with their own eyes, all the enjoyments of this happy spot.

Post upon post succeeded, without further news, and the children buoyed themselves up with the hope that this silence proceeded from the difficulty of fixing the day of arrival; great, therefore, was their disappointment, when the looked-for epistle arrived from Mr. Elton, lamenting the necessity for refusing their reasonable request. He wrote thus—"Although your dear mother is not, on the whole, worse, her frequent relapses make the doctors afraid to trust her during the next winter in England's uncertain climate; for if she caught cold it might prove fatal to her. It is, therefore, as a protection, and not as a remedy, that we have determined on staying abroad. We intend to move from our present abode as soon as the north winds make it comparatively

cold and disagreeable ; and intend going to Hyères, which, having a mountain of its own to shelter it, is always warm, and there we mean to stay the winter. But we cannot think of passing so long a time without our children ; so I shall settle my party at Hyères in the month of October, return to England, arrange affairs which require my presence there, and take you back with me. If Harriet choose to come, she can be Adela's own maid, and sempstress to you boys ; if not, she must find another service. As to David, he had better go back to his father at his farm, and stay till we again require him ; or he can, if he please, get a temporary place. You had better speak to both directly, that they may not think they are taken by surprise.

Harriet was delighted to go to France, and David, though a little disappointed, went for the interval to Mr. Montray, who required such a servant ; and Cook, who was informed by Adela of all these arrangements, deemed it very odd that Mr. Elton should not himself write his orders to her ; and declared, as he was coming, she should not receive them from any one else.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIPER.—FRIGHT.—GIPSY BOY.—RESCUE.—TAKING GIPSY BOY TO PRISON.—
TRIAL.—ARRIVAL OF MR. ELTON.

It was still the great desire of the children to keep everything at Faggot-House in the same order as that in which it had been all the summer, so that, although disappointed of their mother, their dear father might form some notion of its perfection. Each day, however, their stay was shorter in it, till about the middle of the month; and then the warm weather, which we often have at that time, made its appearance, and all that had been taken away was restored to its place, and they passed in it as large a portion of the day as the light would permit. On the second afternoon after their return, Adela and Ernest were about to light the fire, when the former, on stirring the embers of the previous day, was startled by seeing something move under them, and on going nearer to examine, a full-grown viper, which had sought warmth there, raised its head, pushed between Ernest's legs and over Adela's feet, and, gliding through the grass, was soon lost to sight. The two, fortunately for them, had stood perfectly still, and Chance looked up in their faces, as much as to say, "What is that?" But George, whose fear of reptiles was so great as to be a joke among themselves, in one moment, shot like an arrow across the Park, gave himself no time to open the gate leading into the

shrubbery, but vaulted over it. He ran with such determination, that they could distinguish the soles of his shoes at every step. They laughed at him without mercy, and had their tea by themselves, for they knew it would be in vain to ask him to come back. They laughed at him on their return to the house, and could not think of him without laughing; and, partly ashamed of himself, partly vexed because he had taken his tea alone, and partly angry with them for laughing at him, the good-tempered George became quite out of humour, and took himself off to bed. The next day he re-appeared in his usual mood, and they begged his pardon, saying that he had sufficiently punished them by going to bed, for they missed him so much; and that they had intended asking his forgiveness the night before, but when they went to his room, he was fast asleep. He was easily reconciled, and promised to return to Faggot-House in the afternoon, if they would pledge themselves not to play him any tricks; and they too well knew the value of his society to refuse compliance with his desire.

The ground in the vicinity of Faggot-House was well examined with long sticks, George so far conquering himself as to assist in the search, and he rested happily to tea, although now and then they saw the colour of his cheeks vary, when he heard the slightest rustling noise.

"Did you ever hear of the fright cousin William gave to his aunt, some years ago?" asked Adela.

"No," said the boys. "What did he do?"

"He went with this lady and some others into a wood

one day, and seated himself with them on the grass. It was very hot, and they all felt tired and sleepy; he said he could not keep his eyes open, and would retire to a thicker spot, where he should not be seen. His aunt, before she composed herself for a nap, began talking very earnestly to Miss L——, who was of the party, and presently she heard a rustling noise in the grass. She looked around, but not seeing anything, thought she had been mistaken. The noise came again, and again she paused; and this time there was something gliding on and on, and she started up, screaming, "A snake!—a snake!" when all the party followed her example. A loud burst of laughter betrayed who was the snake in the grass; but the lady went away very angry, and cousin William was obliged to humble himself a long time, before he obtained pardon for pushing his cane along so as to frighten her."

"I suppose, George, you inherit your fear from mamma?"

"Perhaps so," replied George; "but I must try to conquer it. Captain Haywood told me last winter, that few persons retain their fears long, when they go to live in places where those creatures abound."

"Mrs. B——," said Ernest, "once assured me that she was as much afraid as any one could be of snakes and lizards, and when she went to live in hot countries, she almost thought she should die from it: she was for ever hunting in all corners for them, and having her rooms swept, but by degrees she forgot them. The first snake she saw was when walking with her husband, and which rushed across her feet. When it was gone, she began to

be frightened, but Mr. B—— laughed at her, and told her it was no longer time to be alarmed. The next that rushed out of the bushes did not distress her at all ; so she ended by being quite brave, and even helping to hunt them away.”

A much more serious alarm now occurred, which, more than anything else, seemed to wean the young people from their attachment to Faggot-House. The brothers, expecting every day would be the last of their sport, were gone to fish, and had taken Chance with them, while Adela, no longer able to sit in the elm-tree, occupied one of the stools at the entrance of the house, and was intently reading. She heard some muffled sounds in the Croft below, but did not heed them. These sounds became louder and louder, and were succeeded by a clamoring noise against the paling. She put her head forward to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, and, to her great alarm, perceived a head covered with curling, black hair, and a pair of large black eyes, just above the palings. Two great brown hands firmly clenched the top. Before she had time to rise, a powerful lad, about sixteen years old, with a strong look of the gipsy, sprang over the fence, and strode up to her. He grinned and nodded at her, and then said, in the most familiar manner—

“How d’ye do, Miss Adela? I have made bold to come and see you, now your brothers are out, and took the shortest way, you see ; there was no occasion for me to come across the Park, for I knew where your house was, by so often seeing you in the tree close to the palings.”



Adela alarmed by the Gipsy-lad.

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Adela was speechless with alarm, and, uncertain what to do, she asked him what he wanted, when, with a most impudent leer, he continued—

“You do not look glad to see me; but I should like something to eat.”

“We do not keep much here to eat now,” replied Adela, her courage returning, “therefore go back the way you came, you have no business here.”

“No, Miss, I should break my neck if I did,” said the impudent boy, with a look of defiance. “You may as well be civil to me and give me what I want, or I shall be obliged to help myself.”

“There is a loaf of bread and some butter on the table waiting for my brothers; but, as I told you before, we do not keep things here now. You may take that and go away.”

She was very much afraid lest he should see the bread-knife, and do her some mischief with it; and yet she dared not go further back into the house to fetch the food for him. He turned round and went to the table, and in one moment, Adela slipped out of the house, and gave a loud whistle from one which hung at the entrance, and which was the signal agreed on between the children and the miller, in case they should ever need assistance. As they had never had occasion to use it before, she was almost afraid they would not understand it now, and she also feared the men might not be at the mill. She took the chance at any rate, for perhaps her brothers might be coming home, and would hasten to her.

On hearing the whistle the boy started forward, and exclaimed:—

“What did you do that for?”

“You will see,” said Adela, courageously, “if you do not make haste you will be surrounded, so you had better escape while you can.”

“Not till I have got some money out of you,” exclaimed the rogue, flourishing the bread-knife over her.

“I have no money,” said Adela, standing firmly, but dreadfully alarmed.

“I know you have,” he returned; “out with it, or—”

Wishing to gain time, Adela slowly began to empty the contents of her pocket.

“Quick! quick!” cried the boy. A rushing, panting noise was heard, and the next moment the dear, faithful Chance seized him by the leg. “Oh, it was to call your dog, was it?” said the ruffian, and aimed a blow at poor Chance, which would probably have finished his life if Adela had not caught his arm, and like lightning, snatched the knife from his hands; an action so sudden, and so unexpected, from that delicate creature, that the boy in his turn was taken by surprise; the knife fell, not, however, without cutting her fingers, and at the same time a man seized the boy by the shoulder, exclaiming—

“What do you do here, you young rascal?”

The miller himself had heard the whistle, and had come to Adela’s assistance as fast as he could; he was followed by the gardener and her brothers, so that the *culprit* was surrounded and secured.

"I wish you would take the dog's teeth out of my leg," he said, sullenly.

Chance was called off, but he did not move his eyes from the boy, and whenever he stirred gave a low growl.

"You are hurt, Miss Adela," said the gardener; "let me take you to the Hall."

"Only my fingers," she replied, "when I snatched at the knife;" and, tremblingly, one of her brothers came and tied his handkerchief round her hand.

"Take my arm," said Ernest, hardly able to speak, "you shake so much."

"You are as bad," said Adela, smiling. She then related the story.

"Come along," said the miller to the boy, "we must take you to the justices, and then you will be put into prison. I have long seen you prowling about the Hall; and if it wasn't for one who knows you there, I would have had you taken up for a vagabond. I believe, Miss, you will have to come to the magistrates to give evidence; and if it is not done now, we shall have to lock this fellow up in the cage all night."

"Let us take him to Mr. Montray's, and go there ourselves," said the Eltons.

"Aye, aye, that will be best."

"You need not thank me, Miss," added the miller, as Adela began to express her obligation; "I am very glad I was in the way, and I am only too glad to catch this fellow; but you look so white: I am afraid you have been well frightened."

A little water revived the trembling girl ; and as they walked along, her brothers told her that they had scarcely heard the whistle, and should have paid no attention to it, but Chance, who was a long way before them, suddenly stopped, raised one paw, erected his ears, and directly they said—"To him, Chance !" he darted off full speed ; and not till they saw him go along at that rate did they recollect the whistle of the Faggot-House, when they followed him also at full speed ; still they did not think their dear little Adela was in such danger.

Arrived at Mr. Montray's, they fortunately found him at home, and when he was told what had occurred, he, as a magistrate, immediately committed the boy to prison at Dullbury.

"I should think two constables would be wanted, sir," said Dalton, the gardener ; "but if two are not at hand, I can spare one of my men."

The warrant was made out ; the constable and one of Mr. Elton's under-gardeners brought a cart, and with his hands tied behind him, the culprit was driven to Dullbury and put into gaol.

During the whole of this time poor Adela was in great distress, and when the Dullbury party was gone, all her courage seemed to forsake her, and Mr. Montray, taking her to his sister, put her under her care and detained all three to tea, promising to drive them home himself, and send word to the Hall where they were.

"Dalton," said the Rector, "I should like to speak a word with you ;" and when he and the miller were

closeted with him, Mr. Montray asked if he were right in thinking that he had seen that boy before ?

Mr. Moffat said, "he had often watched him going down the path in the Croft, but he had never seen him anywhere else, and he always supposed he went into the village."

Dalton stated, "that he had more than once seen him walking with Mr. Elton's old cook, who, on one occasion, finding that they were observed, made him run away directly. At other times she did not know he had watched her. He would have taxed her with it, but no one ever spoke to that old woman if they could help it, she was so ill-tempered."

"It is, then, as I thought," said Mr. Montray ; "but as you will have to give evidence, I will not tell you who he is, and so occasion prejudice."

On returning to the drawing-room the Rector found Adela quite recovered from her fright, though still a little pale. Miss Montray had dressed the cuts in her fingers, which were not deep, and he saluted her with a compliment on her courage.

"What will they do to the boy ?" said Adela.

"I wish they would transport him," answered Mr. Montray ; "but at all events I suppose they will give him solitary confinement, and the treadmill for three months."

"Cannot he be got off?" asked Adela. "I cannot bear that any one should be punished for my sake."

"That is natural," replied Mr. Montray, "but not reasonable ; he has committed an offence, and for the sake of

others, and, perhaps, his own, he ought to be punished; but I fear he is too hardened a sinner for the treadmill to correct."

In the course of the evening the constable returned, saying, that a court was to be held the next day, and he had brought a summons for the young lady, the young gentlemen, and, in short, all the parties concerned, to appear the next day at Dullbury, in order to give evidence in the case of Timothy Dawes, &c., &c.

"And have you not brought one for Chance?" asked the Rector.

"Oh! Mr. Montray," cried George.

"Take my word for it," continued the former, smiling; "he is a most important witness, and we will take him with us."

"*Must* I go?" asked Adela.

"Most assuredly," was the answer; "you are the principal person concerned; and I am sure, if you reflect for an instant, you will see that there is no real cause for alarm at going into court. My sister and I will go with you, and then perhaps you will not feel so much distressed."

The next morning the poney-chaise came to the door; Ernest, as usual, drove, George sat behind, and Chance, with great gravity sat by his side; the groom followed on horseback. As they were going into the Hall, Cook came in, and asked what was for dinner.

"I sent a message to you by Harriet," answered Adela, "that we should all dine at Mr. Montray's."

Still Cook lingered, and offered to put Adela's cloak over her feet ; but Harriet, jealous of her privileges, snatched it out of her hands ; and, strange to say, the woman did not resent this.

"What do you want, Cook," asked Adela ; "can we bring you anything from Dullbury?"

Cook began to mutter something ; but finding that Harriet was close by, suddenly turned round and darted into the Hall.

"What can be the matter with Cook?" said Ernest ; "what did she say to you, Adela?"

"I could not hear one word," replied his sister ; "I cannot think what she wanted."

"I suppose," said George, "she wanted to shew how glad she is we have had somebody taken up."

"For shame, George!" exclaimed Ernest. "Well, she is spiteful enough for anything," added his brother.

"I have it," said Ernest, "it struck me that Timothy Dawes's face was familiar to me ; he is very like the man I have seen walking with her."

"So he is," cried Adela ; "he is the very image of the man who sees her down the Croft."

"Adela," said Ernest, "you know the missing spoons ; but we must not act upon suspicion ; if that boy comes loitering about the Hall, the sooner he is out of the way the better."

"True," replied Adela, "I shall not feel quite so nervous if that be the case."

The Rector and his sister joined the Melton Hall party

at the gate of their drive, and they all arrived at the door of the court-house ; the carriages were driven away to the inn, and Chance was about to be driven away also.

"No !" said Mr. Montray, "that dog will be of use ; let him come in ;" and the unpretending Chance followed, without any notion of his importance.

The investigation proceeded. Adela very gently, but clearly, stated the circumstances, and added, when the knife was produced, that she did not think the boy meant to kill her. The unhappy prisoner then looked up for the first time, and said very earnestly—

"Indeed ! indeed, sir ! I never meant to kill the young lady, only to frighten her."

"It was rather a serious thing," said Justice Wells, "to hold up such a knife as that by way of a threat ; and as proof that you meant to strike with it, you aimed at the poor dog, who saved his mistress. Chance !" he exclaimed.

George led the dog in, who looked rather astonished at the scene ; but the instant he beheld the unfortunate lad, he growled, shewed his teeth, and would have flown at him, had not George restrained him. He was taken out of court, but it was some time before his agitation subsided.

"That is Chance's opinion of frightening Miss Elton," said Mr. Wells, "and we cannot have a stronger proof of the prisoner's conduct. How did you know the young gentlemen were absent ?" asked Mr. Wells.

"I knew they had taken their fishing-tackle from the Hall," was the answer.

"Where did you see them with it?" was the next question, to which no answer was returned.

"Who told you of the sports of the young lady and young gentlemen, in their father's park, and that they had anything there worth taking?" No answer.

"It is not of any use asking him questions, please your worship," said the constable, "he won't speak if he don't choose.

"I do not think it is of any importance that he should be pressed further," said Mr. Wells; "therefore, in spite of Miss Adela's recommendation of him to mercy, we must condemn him to three months' solitary confinement and hard labour."

The boy was led away for his sentence to be fulfilled, and the Melton Hall party drove back to the Rectory, where Adela was evidently much out of spirits. On her return home she enquired after Cook, and was surprised to learn that she had been absent all day, and was only just returned and gone to bed. Mr. Montray had promised to see the prisoner frequently during his confinement, and try to make him sensible of his bad ways; "and who knows," said he, "but that God may bless my work, and make a new man of him." This was a great comfort to the Eltons, and they put money into his hands for procuring some comforts for the prisoner, in case he should appear to be deserving of indulgence, and to help him when he should be released.

The second week in October arrived; and one morning as the children were arranging their books for

Mr. Montray's lesson, the noise of wheels was heard, and, turning their heads, they saw a fly from the Dullbury station, coming up the avenue.

"There he is," exclaimed George, letting the books fall which he was about to put on the table ; and, leaping over everything, he flew to the Hall-door.

"Papa ! papa !" exclaimed the others, as George let down the steps of the carriage ; and all three were encircled by the loving arms of their father.

The carriage was paid and dismissed ; the servants were recognized ; Chance looked up with curiosity, and gratefully received a pat of the head, because he was sure a friend was come.

"How you are grown, my darlings, and how healthy you all look ; the very sight of you will be poor mamma's best medicine ; and I flatter myself we shall all be here together next summer."

"But papa, have you breakfasted?"

"No, my dears ; I reached London last night, and started this morning very early ; so you must give me some."

The bell was rung, and before the meal was over, Mr. Montray arrived. "Oh ;" said he, shaking his friend's hand most warmly ; "I see my reign is over, and I assure you I am very sorry to resign my authority."

"We are very sorry also," said Ernest, "in one sense, and we never can be sufficiently grateful to you, sir, for all your care and kindness," taking one of his hands and George the other, while Adela, as if seized with a sudden

impulse, placed herself by his side, and leaned her head upon his shoulder, while the tears dropped from her eyes. It was evident that she had never quite recovered the shock occasioned by her fright. However, quickly rallying, she said—"Now, Mr. Montray, I have a bargain to make with you ; you are not to inveigle papa to the Rectory, for we must have him."

"I have not a moment to lose," said Mr. Elton, "and I hope you and your sister will dine with us at six this evening. I suppose I must, for a little time, give myself up to my young tyrants here ; after which I shall be closeted with my steward ; to-morrow I must see some of my tenants, perhaps at their own houses, and the children will ride with me ; in the evening I must settle some arrangements with the servants ; the next day we must go to town, remain there perhaps two or three days for the transaction of business, and then be off to Hyères, where I know Mrs. Elton will be anxiously expecting our presence."

The engagement was made, Adela ran into the house-keeper's room, desired Cook to have a very good dinner ready at the appointed time, and all four walked to the Faggot-House.

Everything was shewn to the pleased father ; the alterations made by the water-spout were inspected ; and as they returned and rested in the retreat, the children told the story of Timothy Dawes to their papa ; he shuddered as Adela related her alarm, and caressed Chance with his eyes full ; but he said—"What do you mean by a mystery about Cook ?"

The children then repeated all they knew, and said—"Mr. Montray had not told them what were his suspicions, because they were only suspicions; but after dinner he would be able to judge for himself, as they would leave him to talk the matter over with the Rector."

The three Eltons sat with Miss Montray in the drawing-room, while the delighted father heard the praises of his children from their guardian, who said, that he thought the quiet and unseen influence of the Faggot-House had strongly seconded all his endeavours; it had given the children pleasing and healthful occupation, a sensible object for their thoughts; it had exercised their ingenuity, and very often their temper; it had taught them to help each other; it had kept them from frivolous occupations; and he thought the recollection of it would be a bond of affectionate union between them all their lives. "But," said he, "you have heard of the last adventure, have you not?"

"Yes," with a shudder, replied Mr. Elton, "and I wait for your interpretation of it."

"In an angle of the Church Lane," said Mr. Montray, "is a lone cottage, inhabited by a dark-looking man and his son; the name of the former being Richard Dawes—or at least that is the name he goes by. It is well known that your old servant, Sarah Andrews, has for some time associated with these people, who seem to have few, perhaps no other friends in the neighbourhood; they are such objects of suspicion. They are supposed to be poachers; but have hitherto escaped detection, and as

they regularly pay their few pounds of rent and taxes, we have no hold upon them. The man has never been seen here at the Hall, but the lad has frequently been detected prowling about, and slipping out and in, when he has flattered himself he has not been seen. Dalton and I have had our eyes on him for some time. A few of your spoons have been missed, and Cook has always accused your children of taking them, and losing them at Faggot-House, and they have never had any there but the mock-silver which they bought at Dullbury ; and it is this lad who is now in prison for his attack upon Adela. We cannot prove anything, therefore I have never said a word to Cook ; but I am sadly afraid she is duped by those persons. It would be absurd to suppose she would knowingly connect herself with dishonesty. You will, however, I think, be wise, if you place some one else in the house this winter with her, if you do not altogether displace her—that may be a check, not upon her, poor thing, if left to her free will ; but upon those who have cajoled her into association with themselves.”

Mr. Elton thought with pain of this communication, but observed, “ I shall talk to her to-morrow without appearing to know what you have told me ; and as I see a great alteration in her appearance, I shall suggest that she is not strong enough for her services here, and propose her going to my house in town.”

“ She would be better out of your service altogether, I am afraid ; but you cannot possibly send her away.”

“ Of course not,” said Mr. Elton.

CHAPTER IX.

DISPOSAL OF FAGGOT-HOUSE EFFECTS.—DEMOLITION OF FAGGOT-HOUSE.—
SNAKES, SPIDERS, ETC.—CAIRN.—DEPARTURE.—CHANCE.—ARRIVAL AT
HYERES.—MRS. ELTON'S RECOVERY.—RETURN OF THE FAMILY.—END OF
THE CROSS COOK.

THE next day, after their ride, while Mr. Elton was engaged with business, his children removed all their treasures from Faggot-House; Dalton took back the table and stools to their respective places; and as the kitchen-maid had been asked in church with the dairyman, they presented her with the remainder of their goods and chattels, consisting of cups and saucers, plates and dishes, mugs, knives and forks, various articles of tin and iron, and which she and Ralph considered as a valuable dowry. The children could not see the demolition of their happy dwelling without regret, but it would not do to leave it standing, for Jim Stubbs had told them it would be a harbour for vermin, and besides which, the faggots would be required for burning. So down came the walls of wood, which were stacked in a different part of the Park, and then under them was discovered a nest of the common field-snake, and at a considerable distance from it, various colonies of common and field-mice. Numerous spiders, mole-crickets, and other insects, seemed to have considered it as a charming refuge, but were now driven out to seek their fortunes elsewhere. "And only think," said George, "of our having a nest of snakes so close to us at all times."

Mr. Elton had given his children the means of rewarding those who had helped them, and, being all assembled at that moment to witness the end of the entertainment, money was distributed among them, and as the last faggots were driven away, the men gave three hearty cheers for the old Faggot-House and their young mistress and masters.

"What shall we do with the oven?" said George, "as they all three lingered near the spot.

"Let it remain," said Ernest.

"No," exclaimed Adela, "let us unmake it, fill up the hole, and lay all the stones in a heap upon the tiles which formed our fire-place. They will rise into a small cairn, and mark the spot on which we had our first household hearth; and papa will, I dare say, give orders that it shall never be disturbed."

"What an excellent idea!" said the boys, and immediately set to work to accomplish it. The stones made quite a respectable heap, which, in after years, the three shewed to their own children, while they told them of the adventures of the few months existence of Faggot-House.

As long as the pollarded elm lasted, there flourished the white currant bush, almost amounting to a tree in itself, and it was always considered as a curiosity by many. But the park-palings were removed for the sake of alteration, and then, deprived of its support, down fell the aged elm. The currant-tree was planted in the soil, but it languished and died when separated from its old friend.

The children returned to the Hall by way of the Rectory, where they placed their funds for the poor, during the ensuing winter, in the hands of Miss Montray and her brother.

' " Ah ! " said the poor people afterwards, " they are very good, but we shall miss the kind words and looks they used to give us, and which are sometimes almost as good as money. "

When they met their father at dinner-time, he told them he had thanked Mr. Moffatt, the miller, for his prompt assistance rendered to Adela, who had told him that the boy was so astonished at Adela's courage, that he had not dared to behave as roughly as he had intended, for he was convinced she could not have done so if she had not had help at hand, " and it is very likely she narrowly escaped being stunned. "

" I hope, my dear child, " continued he, " you will never suffer the courage with which God has gifted you to be obscured. But I have news to tell you. As soon as Mr. Murray left me, I spoke to the servants ; and when I told Cook, that in consideration of her age and services, I intended putting the Daltons, and Ralph and his wife, into the Hall for the winter, and would be glad if she would go to the much less laborious task of taking care of the town house, she replied, with some impertinence, that she had been treated with such disrespect by you children, and so much as if she were nobody, that she had provided for herself, and would not trouble me ; and that she meant to settle elsewhere. I asked her what line of

life she intended to enter into, and she answered by tossing her head, and saying she had had a great many offers of marriage, and she had at last determined to accept one, and should be married as soon we were gone. I in vain requested to know on whom she was going to bestow herself, but nothing would induce her to tell me. I said I was sure she had saved money, and begged of her not to let any husband get hold of it; but she said she could take care of herself. I even offered to increase the sum, if she would but let me know all about it; but she said she had plenty, and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my temper with her; but I ended by entreating her not to do anything without consulting Mr. Montray, who would be as good a friend to her as myself. 'Humph!' she said, 'Mr. Montray, indeed! I should be badly off if I had not better friends than he,' and she bounced out of the room. I cannot help being very sorry for the poor old creature, for whom I anticipate a great deal of misery."

"Misery enough," said Ernest, "if she be going to marry the man who has been walking about with her, and whom we believe to be the father of the lad who is in prison!"

"Ah," said Mr. Elton, "Mr. Montray told me all about him; but I can do no more, for she has a right to act for herself."

The next morning, the party assembled early for departure, and as they were eating their breakfast, the Cook burst into the room, crying in the most fearful manner,

throwing herself on the ground with frantic gestures, exclaiming, "that no one ever was so ill-treated; that she had served and loved them all their lives, and now they were going away without saying good bye."

There was a mixture of feeling and pride, obstinacy, falsehood, nonsense and truth, which was very distressing; but in the midst of all, she had had discrimination enough to throw herself on a large cocoa-nut mat, instead of the bare boards.

"Is she mad?" fearfully asked Adela.

"It is the madness of temper!" said Mr. Elton; and, lifting her from the ground, he placed her in a chair, and left her, saying they all wished her well, and hoped she would be happy. He joined his children in the hall, where he was saluted with "Oh, Papa!" from all three.

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Chance!"

"Well, what of him? Of course he will be happy with the servants?"

The children looked at each other with tearful eyes.

"He saved my life from the gipsy boy," said Adela, clasping the dog round the neck.

Mr. Elton was puzzled.

"He will be very troublesome," said he.

"We will take all the trouble," exclaimed the boys.

"He will cost a great deal of money," added Mr. Elton.

"Deduct it from our allowance," said all three children.

"He has decided for himself," said Mr. Elton, laughing; for Chance had jumped into the carriage waiting for them,

and not for a moment doubting that he was to go wherever his friends went, had seated himself. This put old Cook out of their memory; they saw Mr. and Miss Montray at their gate, waiting to give the farewell salute and benediction; the carriage stopped, and Mr. Elton said—

“Shall we leave Chance with Mr. and Miss Montray; I am sure they will take care of him?”

“That we will,” exclaimed the Rector, as he advanced to the carriage and put out his hand to take him; but Chance had his head under George’s jacket, and crept as closely to him as possible, evidently comprehending what was then passing about himself. Mr. Elton shook his head and exclaimed—

“I believe I must yield, and make myself contented under the rule of my *four* tyrants.”

The final “God bless you!” was said; Chance was as good as possible during the journey—stayed at home the few days they passed in town, with the exception of a walk in the Park, which the boys gave him each morning, and the whole party reached Hyères in health and safety, much to the delight and renovation of Mrs. Elton, who, knowing by letter what Chance had done, almost considered him as another child; and he became so much attached to her, that he was her constant attendant at home and in her drives; those drives were soon accompanied by walks, for she recovered her health and strength now she had those about her whom she loved.

The Eltons returned to England late in the Spring; the boys went to Rugby, and Adela worked with a


governess, all endeavouring to make up for their late comparative idleness, though they had been most eager and persevering in their exploration of the treasures presented by the Mediterranean, where they had made many excursions.

There only now remains the fate of Cook to be told, and which, perhaps, may be anticipated by those who have ever watched the growth of an evil temper, and seen its withering and transforming effects. Mr. Montray thus wrote—

“You will scarcely be surprised when I tell you that the fate of your old Cook is sealed, and will rejoice in the hope, that the complaining, disturbed spirit, has made its peace, for she was very penitent.”

“Poor old Cook!” exclaimed the children.

“It is true,” continued Mr. Montray, “that the old man who lived so mysteriously at the cottage in Church Lane paid his addresses to her, no doubt tempted by the report which I find was very current in the village, that she had saved a great deal of money, which she had placed in the Dullbury bank. The man Dawes took a room for a little time in the neighbouring parish, and procured a license; and I was not aware they were married till some time after the event had taken place; I then saw that the cottage looked a little more cheerful than usual; and I also saw Mrs. Richard Dawes in a very smart bonnet and shawl come into my church. It was very fortunate for me that I had not ascended into the desk, my gravity was so disturbed; and my sister tells me she walked out, after



the service was over, giving condescending nods to the abashed villagers : her husband did not come, and I could understand his absence for many reasons ; one of which was, the thought of his poor boy in solitary confinement. By-the-bye, I may as well say here, that I had some hopes of reclaiming that unfortunate lad, for he shewed signs of feeling, and I brought him to shed tears. He even appeared glad to see me when I went to the prison.

“But to return to poor old Sarah. Her triumph was but of short duration; for, two months after, I passed the cottage, the shutters of which were closed, and there was every look of abandonment about it. In another week I heard that smoke had been again seen to issue from the chimney; then, that an old woman, the very personification of misery, had been seen in the neighbourhood, robbing the hedges for fire-wood. I suspected who it was, and preparing your men for it, desired them not to molest her. Once or twice I nearly rode over her; but as she had evidently tried to conceal herself, I pretended not to see her.”

I narrowly watched the cottage chimney, and as long as I saw smoke there I forbore to intrude; but one day there being no sign of habitation, I knocked at the door and windows; no answer was returned, and I went again the next day. After knocking for some time, I thought I heard a faint groan. I then fastened up my horse, managed to lift a shutter off its hinges, broke a window, and got into the house. I was perfectly horror-struck at the sight before me. There lay poor old Sarah, nearly starved to death; not even a cup of water within her reach.

I galloped home, ordered a carriage, and one of my women servants to come, and take the wretched being to my house, after pouring a little broth down her throat. She rallied for a few days, but the shock had been too great, and she sank under it.

During the few days of revival, Sarah told me her late history. She said that Richard Dawes had insinuated himself into her favour, and that then he had pretended to be very fond of her. His son, too, was always about the place, calling her mother, and flattering her, and she suspects it was he who took the spoons. When she heard he had been taken up, her distress was very great, especially as it was she who had first told Timothy of the Faggot-House; but Dawes always kept her from speaking of him. Such was her infatuation that she had nothing secured, so he had seized on all her property. The very day Timothy was discharged from prison, he and his father went off together; they took no leave of her, but in a few days she was convinced they were gone for ever, taking all with them; and she tried to trace them, but in vain, and then returned to the cottage. She, however, soon became too ill to help herself, and there she must have died alone, was if I had not providentially come to her succour. She very penitent, and hoped you would forgive her; and I have been more minute in my account, as she is a fearful warning, that with our fallen nature, we must never cease to watch against the indulgence of our evil propensities.

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